Australians at War Film Archive

Stanley Connelly (Slim) - Transcript of interview

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Tape 1

00:39 **Give us a brief overview first please.**

Sure. Well I was born in 1930 in Carlton and later lived in North Fitzroy where I spent most of my childhood. I went to St. Bridget's

01:00 school in North Fitzroy and by the time I was 13 the Second World War was well under way and within a couple of years of its conclusion so they were rather hectic times. Also it was immediately after the depression so things were fairly tight money wise and houses and things were pretty run down and dilapidated in those days.

01:30 I left school at the age of 13 years immediately after I completed my merit certificate as it was known in those days and went to work because there was a great demand for any sort of labour in those days because of the war and just the general shortage of labour. I went to work for a baker and pastry cook and stayed with him for about two years. We

02:00 talked about apprenticeship but never really did anything about it and I didn't really feel that it was my future in life. My good friend Ed Roberts and I then joined up together and went working around the bush for a couple of years. We whumped wheat, cut wood and rode boundaries and did all the things that boys like to do and earned money at the same time. Those were a couple of good years – we really enjoyed them.

02:30 But on returning to Melbourne we looked around and what we were going to do next and we decided that it might be a good idea to join the army. There was still a lot of glamour about the military because the war had just recently finished. I'm talking now about 1947 thereabouts '48. We were actually working in a tyre factory – the old Olympic tyre factory out at West Footscray I don't think its

03:00 still there now. We were working three shifts – morning, afternoon and night and there was as much work as we were prepared to do and we were earning really good money at it but we were looking round for something better to do with our lives and we decided one morning that we'd join the army. Seemed like a good idea at the time. So in April 1949 thereabouts we went along to

03:30 recruitment and joined up. Went to Puckapunyal, did basic training, were allocated to go to Japan and join BCOF [British Commonwealth Occupation Force] where we became members of 67 Battalion which later became the 3rd Battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment and we served. Arrived in Japan around September 1949 and were there until the beginning of the Korean War.

04:00 It was necessary to volunteer for war service in those days and so we signed up for that and we went across to Korea in September 1950 and jumping forward, I was wounded in action at Kapyong and returned to Japan for a month or so and then returned to Korea again and served out the

04:30 remainder of my twelve months contract period. I was there in time for the battle of Maryang San, which took place in October and I left Korea shortly after that battle and after a month or so in Japan finalising matters we were returned to Australia late in 1951.

05:00 I was in the army for six years, it was a regular army enlistment in those days and I transferred to the, well first I went to 2 Battalion [Royal Australian Regiment] and assisted in the training of 2 Battalion for their trip to Korea and later I transferred to the Clerical Division, the Army Services Corps and

05:30 completed my six year term in clerical work at Royal Park, the old personnel depot. Upon discharge I elected to be discharged at the end of the six years because there was an option to rejoin but I felt the time had come for me to get out. And I took a discharge and collected my deferred pay which was rather nice in those days

06:00 and went to work. I worked for Cole Stills as a trainee Manager for a year or two, Olympic Games came on 1956 and I made some quick money by driving taxis during, in the period before, during and after the Olympic games. But that was a temporary thing and

06:30 I looked for something more permanent because I was thinking it was about time I thought about getting married. I'd met Loretta by that time so I got a job with the Dunlop Rubber Company and we got married, we moved into the house at Montmorency, we had three daughters.

07:00 In the meantime I had left the tyre business and had opened a business of my own with my brother in partnership which unfortunately went bust in what was known as the Menzies credit squeeze in 1950 or '51 so we moved on from that but I was relatively successful thereafter, I got into management, I managed a

07:30 region for the Hardie rubber company and I managed, where did I go? Such a long time ago. I managed… goodness me. An importing and shipping company – MacDonald Hamiltons – then I went to A Company called Dexion who make racks and

08:00 shelves and managed Victoria and Tasmania for them for about five years. And ultimately I worked for the big national company – Boral. They were a large group of companies and I managed several companies within the group right up until my retirement in 1988. Since I retired I've lived here at Yarrambat. I've been in a nice

08:30 remote area surrounded by bush and our retirement is a very peaceful time of our lives. I guess that's a brief summary.

Can you tell me about your childhood in the 1930s and your family and your parents?

09:00 Yes. My mother immigrated for England arrived in Australia around.. she was born in 1906 I think and she arrived here when she was about six years old. Just before the war – about 1912. Her father was German, his name was Schwalky and they had a fruit block in the Griffith

09:30 irrigation area and that's where she was raised. But he was threatened with interment during the First World War but managed to evade it. He convinced the authorities at the time that he was a good Australian citizen and stayed out of the interment camps – most fortunate for him really. My mother had two sisters

10:00 and she met my Dad in Griffith. He was one of ten children, there were nine boys and one girl in his family. He was born near Canberra, a place called Spring Gully and the address, Spring Gully was so small that it was called Spring Gully, near Collector, near Canberra so the postman could find it. His father was some sort of

10:30 a… His father immigrated from Ireland in the late 1880's and he was some sort of a milk factory manager. He had the skills and the experience to manage local milk processing plants. Dad and Mum

11:00 moved to Melbourne shortly after their marriage and they lived in a variety of places but during the depression we moved into a little old weatherboard house in North Fitzroy, in a little street called Watkins Street. The house is no longer there but the street still is. It was very low rent – something like fourteen shillings a week and we were battling to pay that you know, I should mention that there were seven children in our family,

11:30 three brothers and three sisters. I'm number three on the scale – first boy – I got Dad's name Stanley and his brother's name Francis and when my next brother come along he got Francis also because Dad had fond memories of his brother Francis who died in the First World War. And as I mentioned in the brief five minute thing -

12:00 I and all my brothers and sisters went to the St. Bridget's school in North Fitzroy – just an ordinary primary school. Only went from grades 1 to grade 8 and we, the nuns were the teachers there. The sisters of the good Samaritan. In those days they used to wear the black cloaks and black hair coverings and so on and they were rather strict and severe but the class

12:30 sizes were about 60 kids per class so they needed to have fairly strict control. Usually they spoke softly and carried a very large strap.

Did you get hit with it?

No very often no, I was one of the quiet kids. And I would try and sit up the back and just keep quiet and keep abreast of things you know. But I didn't mind school, I enjoyed it

13:00 I was a reasonably quick learner, I learned to read very early and read voraciously. There was no television of course in those days and reading was a great way to fill in the evening hours. But the war was on by then well and truly and there was a great demand for labour and I was keen to get out there and earn some money and help with the family and

13:30 back up the old man who didn't have much in the way of skills. He was manpowered as the called it into the munition factories during the war. He hated it, absolutely hated it. He was a freelancer you know, always worked for himself, always found a way to make a quid and he would have liked to have kept doing that but he was forced by the labour control in those days to work in a munition factory.

14:00 Which were over in the western suburbs somewhere. And the pay was pretty poor you know, I think he

was earning about 2 pounds 17 and 6 per week, which equates to about 6 dollars today. Doesn't go far with seven kids.

14:30 **Were they Catholics?**

Dad was Catholic, Mum wasn't. He wasn't a practising Catholic but he was pretty well imbued with the idea that Catholics were different to the others and in fact there was a lot of animosity in those days between the Irish and the English and mostly the Irish were the Catholics and the English

15:00 were the Church of England people. Even the school kids used to shout insults across the street at each you know, "Catholic dogs sit on logs" and all this sort of thing. And…

'Proddy dogs jump like frogs…'?

'…in and out the water', yeah. That sort of thing so it was good natured but you know there was an underlying difference between the two groups.

15:30 **Do you remember much animosity between the adults?**

Well my Dad hated the English. "Never, never trust a Pommy," you know? I'm sure his father had inculcated that into him. He had a tremendous dislike for the English who he always referred to as the Pommies. And looking back it was an irrational dislike I guess and he was a fairly aggressive

16:00 fellow. He boxed a lot in his youth and when he was in his cups he was likely to get into a fight somewhere anyhow.

Did he drink much?

Yes quite a lot. In fact in those days it wasn't uncommon for men to drink themselves into paralytic states til they could hardly walk home. As you know the pubs used to close at

16:30 six o'clock and the men would all get in the pub at five and get as many beers in as the could before the bell rang and forced them to leave and then they'd sometimes in [(UNCLEAR)] he'd bring home a bottle or two of wine and finish off the day with that. God knows how he found the money – somehow, somehow.

I don't know how they managed to get off to work in the morning either.

No.

17:00 And in the ammunition factory he had to leave home about half past five in the morning, six o'clock in the morning to get to West Footscray to start work at seven o'clock. Like I said, he hated it but he was a good guy you know. A good guy. Good all round, a bit tough and hard and aggressive and assertive and I guess if you're one of nine boys you learn pretty fast that if you don't use your elbows a bit you're going to get left behind. I see that in my grandsons now you know.

17:30 The younger ones, there are three boys and the younger one has to push pretty hard to make sure he gets his share of the pie as it were. Gets all the privileges that the others are getting.

It must have been pretty tough in the '30s, the size of the family –

18:00 **it must have been hard to feed all those mouths?**

Look times were tough – we never went without food though. Somehow there was always food on the table. But there was very little else you know the house was tumbling down, there were holes in the wall and we'd sleep three to a bed and we'd bathe only on Saturday nights and use the same water for all seven kids – topped up occasionally to keep some sort of a temperature.

18:30 And clothing was pretty threadbare, wouldn't be unusual to see kids wearing their gumboots in summertime because they had nothing else to put on their feet you know. But there was no sort of awareness in us that we were so poor and struggling so hard. Everybody was the same so we just took it as that was the way life was. As I look back on it

19:00 I can remember that all the houses were in poor repair, the paint was peeling off, nobody had any money. There were no motorcars or anything of that sort in those days. And the depression although it's supposed to have finished by the mid-1930's it was still very much in evidence in North Fitzroy right up until the time of the war and maybe for the first year or two of the war

19:30 until we really got involved in full production and that. But no we didn't feel deprived and we had a good childhood. We lived near the Edinburgh gardens, we had plenty of must have been fifty acres of parks as you'd know in North Fitzroy- the old Edinburgh gardens, that was our stamping ground. And we had a lot of good memories from childhood.

20:00 **What sort of food did you eat?**

A lot of offal was used in those days. Liver, tripe, rabbit – rabbit was a very common meal. The man would come around with a hand barrow and sell you rabbits, a pair for a shilling you know and you could make quite a big meal out of a pair of rabbits even for seven kids and two adults.

20:30 Prepared foods of course weren't available and wouldn't have been affordable if they were. Everything was brought in the unprepared state and was prepared in the home. I have no other special memories about foods.

Did you ever go out and get your own rabbits?

Yeah. It was easy to catch rabbits in those days. More so than when I became an early teenager

21:00 you know. We would ride bikes out as far as, well, not far past Preston, you know the Rose, Shamrock and Thistle hotel. Beyond that you could catch rabbit in plenty. In fact you know they were in plague proportions of course.

How did you catch them?

With ferrets. Somebody would always have some ferrets. The traditional way to carry them was in a box in a sling but the hard

21:30 men would just pop them down the front of their shirt. The ferret would nestle down in the space above the belt, or two of them even and a couple of nets and you'd out the ferret in the rabbit burrow and out come the rabbits into the nets. But that was later, I was thinking more about our early childhood, you know, our pre-teen years and yeah the rabbit man and the fruit and vegetable man would come around and

22:00 one way or another you know they'd be a meal on the table three times a day.

Bet you had to eat it quick though?

Yes. Those with the longest arms did the best. No, Mum was great she worked her fingers to the bone you know, washing of course, clothes washing then was down by boiling up a large copper in

22:30 a laundry room and the agitation of the boiling would shake the dirt out of the clothes and then there'd be a pair of troves or troughs and they would hand wash every item from one trough into the other to finish it so you know all the clothing for all those kids was all done, put through on washing day, usually Monday and all by hand

23:00 and it was a hard days work for the mothers in those days.

Did you have to help out?

Yes but not to any great extent. We would go get wood for the cooper for instance, there was a timber mill nearby and we would pick up the off cuts and there was a large shoe factory nearby and we'd pick up the trimmings from the leatherworks and they would burn beautifully under the

23:30 copper because the copper was of course not only the clothes washing device but it was also the heating for the bath. The bath and the laundry would be in the same room inadvertently in old houses in those days and when bath day came the copper would be boiled up and kept boiling and the water would be bucketed from the copper into the bathtub.

24:00 No hot water services. In fact chip hot water heaters came in a lot later and everybody had one of those. I don't know if you remember those, little round tubular device, which had a coil in it and a little chip heater in the bottom, wood chips? And the water ran from that directly into the bath and that was about the only hot water service that most houses had and

24:30 I'm talking now about the war years, as late as that. Going back to myself, I started school early, as soon as I turned five I started school so I was through to grade 8 the last your of primary by the time I was twelve. And the final education certificate that you could gain in those days was the merit certificate, which came at the end

25:00 of grade 8. I had in fact won a scholarship in grade seven to go to the Christian Brothers school but there was no chance that we could afford the books and the uniforms and things. The education would have been free but the cost of books and special clothing and so on was just totally out of the question as far as my family was concerned so we had to forgo that. That

25:30 would have been an opportunity of course for higher education but in North Fitzroy in the 1930s and 40s there was no great desire of people to achieve higher education. University of course was seen to be totally out of reach.

Were you good at school?

Yeah. Yeah I was always in the top two or three in the class yeah.

26:00 **What sort if subjects were you interested in?**

Mostly English, reading, writing, literature. Mind you the subjects weren't very complex. I mean there was no algebra or anything of that sort. It was just simple reading, writing and arithmetic. I was mostly bored in school I was usually reading the next year's books and lessons you know surreptitiously while

26:30 the teaching of the general class… Such a large class the teaching had to be very, very basic you know. Sixty kids in the class and one teacher for the whole day. No changing teacher. Every day for the whole year that you're in that grade you had that teacher and you had 60 classmates. That's basic education. But still it was the standard of the day you know. That was the way it was done.

27:00 So, I turned 13 in August 1943, got the merit certificate and thought, "That's enough for me. I won't wait for the end of the year." I bugged out of school there and then and as I mentioned earlier I got a job with a pastry cook. I'd been working for him after school when I was 12 years old cleaning his trays and setting up the benches

27:30 and so on but by the time I'd arrived after school they'd finished their days production and I just did the general clean up. That was in a business in Brunswick Street, Fitzroy and the big day of the year was… well Christmas was big but Easter,

28:00 hot cross bun day we'd start work at four o'clock in the morning and work til nine o'clock at night producing buns. I'd have been about 14 then. And Christmas was big too because we'd make hundreds and hundreds of Christmas puddings and the like in addition to the ordinary days production. We used to make bread and cakes and stuff like that. But

28:30 it wasn't a career that I could see myself spending the rest of my life in so I moved on. Shall we move on from school then?

I wanted to ask you – your father and your uncle were both in the first war – can you tell me at that time what did you know about what happened to them?

No my father wasn't in the First World War. Two of his brothers

29:00 were in the First World War. Clary and Francis.

Did you talk to Clary and Francis much about their experience?

They both died in the war. One was killed in action and the other died of bronchopneumonia in England on his way across to France. Did I talk to my Dad about it? No. I can't ever think

29:30 of him mentioning the war. Around the house there were some pictures you know that had something to do with the war – mementos of some sort I imagine that probably reminded him of his brothers. My Dad incidentally had a birth defect in one of his feet and he was crippled all his life. Used to have to wear a special boot on one

30:00 foot. It probably could have been treated but there was no treatment available in Spring Gully near Collector and…

Near Canberra…

Yeah, so he carried that birth defect with him right through his life and he was never eligible for military service but yeah two of his brothers died as a result of their service in the First World War. But

30:30 I've looked up their records since and I noted with interest that his brother Francis who was killed in action in France, prior to his death he had been wounded in action and was shot through the right thigh and exactly the same thing happened to me some 50 years later at

31:00 well no, 30 years later in Korea in the Battle of Kapyong. So sort of history repeats itself.

It's hereditary.

Could be that.

Tell me – at that time as a youth what did you know about the First World War in general. Were there other men in the street that you might have talked to or what were you taught at school?

31:30 It was never mentioned much at school but there were veterans from the war, neighbours in the street who, one in particular who'd been gassed in France and was always chronically ill. Always in tremendous respiratory problems. He was the next door neighbour and I knew him well and was very much aware of his illness and the cause of it.

32:00 A lot of the men who'd, veterans of the First World War were addicted to alcohol and were frequently drunk and sometimes violent and that was evident. I was sort of aware of that and I was sort of aware that it was a consequence of the war. But there was very little spoken about it and I was just vaguely

32:30 aware that there had been a First World War but as I was coming towards my teenage years the Second World War was very much in evidence. I clearly remember the commencement of the Second World War. I remember Menzies announcement on the radio and I remember waking up in the middle of the night with the paper boys running through the

33:00 street as they used to in those days when any news broke calling out, "Extra! Extra!" an extra addition of the newspapers was printed and my parents ran put and brought one and the big headline right

across the top of the paper was the single word ‘WAR’ and we knew then that the Second World War had started and I read every day the papers. Followed the progress of the war right through the whole

33:30 five years.

What was your reaction to it?

I was interested in it, I had no fear of it. It was exciting, there was action being taken such as blackouts you know and

34:00 like all windows had to be blacked out in case of air raids and glass was criss-crossed with sticky paper so that if it shattered it would minimise the damage. There were air raid wardens who walked the street and if you had a chink of light showing they’d hammer on your door and say, “Get that light out!” Cars drove around with headlights heavily shrouded just a

34:30 tiny speck of light coming out of the headlights. The streets were browned out, there were American soldiers all around the place. I can remember then in the streets of Melbourne. I can remember seeing them in the company of the girls and they’d be rumours around that some of the girls had taken up with them.

35:00 The older girls. So you know, but my overall interest in the First World War was what I read, in the Second World War was what I read in the papers. I can’t remember discussing it at any length with anyone else. I took a private interest in it and kept very much abreast of it.

Was it frightening or exciting or…?

35:30 It was more exciting than frightening I think. For me personally. I never at any stage felt any fear about it. It never seemed to me that we were in any real or imminent danger but it was a world wide event of course and the news was just coming through every day. There was nothing on the front pages bar the

36:00 events of the war. Maps and pictures and reports of those who were lost and yeah I followed it very closely. I took a great interest in it.

Did you know other kids parents who got involved or any other men?

In the environment I lived in the parents were in their 40s and the kids were all in their pre- or early teenage

36:30 There were a lot of other kids around, a lot of families around but they were all just in that stage of their life so no I didn’t know a lot of people that were actually in the service. On the margin of the circle that I sort of was aware of there were people that I vaguely knew that were in the services. But

37:00 I had no close connection with them.

The kids at school and yourself were you given any role at all? And jobs or any training about air raids or having to dig trenches or anything like that?

37:30 I can’t remember any talk about it ay school. The nuns studiously avoided it as I recollect. But in all the parks and public areas, air raid trenches were dug yes and lined with timber and covered over with mounds of soil. A great playground for the kids, zigzag trenches and my family we decided we should have an air raid shelter and

38:00 we dug the biggest hole you ever saw in our back yard but the more we dug, the hole didn’t seem to get any deeper, it just seemed to get wider. And it never really did become any sort of protection from air raids and we kids weren’t involved in it out of fear it was just a diversion as far as we were concerned. Kids like to different holes and mess around with dirt and stuff.

38:30 So we enjoyed that side of it. A lot of people did endeavour to make their own air raid shelters in their own back yard. You were encouraged to do it at the time. But of course the air raids never came to Melbourne and there were never needed but they were there.

What about drives to raise money or anything like that that you were involved in?

39:00 Yeah there were posters on all the lamp posts ‘Buy war bonds’ and there were other ads around but the one that was most in my sight was the sort of small poster you know stuck on every telegraph pole urging people to invest their money in war bonds. And that’s about as much as I recollect about the money side of it.

39:30 **Do you remember posters or newsreels or anything about recruitment or to keep quiet?**

Yes ‘The enemy listens’. Oh yeah there were posters and advertisements of that sort. Certainly newsreels, every theatre had newsreels that

40:00 the feature movies were always preceded by newsreels and most of the news of course was about the war. So yes that was the way that one kept abreast of what was happening on the various battlefronts.

40:30 **Do you remember seeing what information you had of Hitler and what was actually happening in the war?**

Yes. Of course all the Nazi identities were well known to us, Hitler, Göring, Goebbels, in fact it's still in my mind the old ditty comes back, I don't know whether people still remember but it went something like:

41:00 'Hitler has only got one ball' do you remember that?

Yep.

Sung with great gusto because it was derogatory of him and it was quite funny. But yeah, we knew who the Nazi's were and we knew who the Japanese leaders were. We knew that Hirohito was the Emperor and that Tojo was the

41:30 grand Pooh-Bah of the military forces and yeah that was sort of common knowledge.

Tape 2

00:34 **We were just taking about Hitler only having one ball – could you sing that for us or at least tell us all the words?**

Okay. They might censor us out but let's do it. 'Hitler has only got one ball, Goering has two but very small, Himmler

01:00 has something similar but poor old Goebbels has no balls at all!' As I say, sung with great gusto.

What's the name of the tune – dah dah dah dah dah dah…?

Dah dah dah dah dah. Yeah it's a marching tune. One of Caesar's probably.

01:30 **The 30s, being a time of high unemployment and hardship for a lot of people – do you remember people who were worse off than your family? Maybe people whose parents didn't have a job or didn't have shoes? People who were obviously doing it hard?**

Yes. Yes.

02:00 I can't specifically but I know that we were pretty hard up but there was always somebody who was worse off. The family that lived next door to us, they had six children, the Roberts' and one of the boys was what you would call my best mate and he died about ten years ago but we were mates all our lives.

02:30 I'd say they were slightly worse off than we were. They had no work and I don't know how people survived. There was no unemployment money in those days, if you didn't have work the only way you could get food was through something called the 'sustenance'. I gather where you had to line up and get coupons for food that could be used at the local stores.

03:00 And the men could line up at the local council officers and they might get a days work on the roads for which they might get perhaps ten shillings but it wouldn't be a job it'd just be from time to time the opportunity to put a day in here and there. So I guess the adults were fairly depressed

03:30 but we children we lived an active and healthy and energetic lifestyle. There was always plenty to do, plenty of places to go and we always knew how to entertain ourselves.

What sort of things did you do for fun?

Well the Merri Creek wasn't very far away and that was a favourite haunt. It was a nice bit of wilderness in the suburbs. We could spend the whole day there just doing what kids do;

04:00 playing with the water and the stones and running about in the bushes and the like. We had the Edinburgh gardens I mentioned, a very big parklands in North Fitzroy and we'd play cricket in the street and we'd play football in the street.

04:30 Sometimes to the chagrin of the neighbours. There was the risk of breaking windows because the streets were narrow and the houses were right on the footpath. And if we didn't have a real football which most of the time we didn't we'd roll up newspapers and tie it up with string and kick that from one end to the other. A rubbish bin in the middle of the road would serve as a wicket for cricket. And so there was a lot of that played.

05:00 We'd play a game call 'Tip Tap'. We'd have a large stick and a small stick sharpened at each end and the idea was you hit the sharpened end and it would fly in the air and you'd hit it while it was in the air and gain, rather like golf, gain yards. That was a great risk to the neighbours windows also. But they were typically the sort of games we'd play in those days.

05:30 But just hanging around, just sitting around and talking to the other kids – a lot of time spent like that.

The Collingwood area is quite renowned for pushes and gangs. Do you remember a lot of that?

I knew of them but I didn't have an association with them. But yes that is a fact, there were some pretty tough gangs, especially from Collingwood.

06:00 In a minor way we'd have our street gang and the next street along would have their street gang and there'd be a bit of hurvy purvey from time to time but it wouldn't amount to much more than a bit of push and shove and a bit of name calling. But yeah we had the Watkins street gang and the next street along was Prook Street and they had their gang and I can still remember the faces of the kids on the opposite gang. There was no shortage of kids used

06:30 to make up the gangs. Families were big in those days and they lived in tin fifteen foot frontage houses so there were plenty of them, each street had plenty.

Did you ever hear of the Fitzroy crutches?

Fitzroy crutches? No. Were they a gang?

Yeah. I must admit we were both a bit fascinated by them. They used to get around with crutches. They all carried a crutch.

07:00 Yeah? Never heard of them. No.

Ok. We're still not sure if they're real or not.

I think I would have heard of it.

Were most of the families in your area were they Irish?

I don't think I ever made that distinction but certainly the kids that went to the Catholic school were either Irish or Italian

07:30 by and large. There'd been an earlier wave of Italian immigration of course and so maybe one third of them were Italian and the other two thirds were Irish and we sort of weren't aware though that there were those divisions except in a sort of general way. But in our day to day life it wasn't something that occupied our minds very much.

08:00 **Were there any other races around?**

Not to my recollection no. In fact you know we were well and truly into the white Australia policy and there were limitations on who could come which will lead us into a story later about when we were in Mulla I must tell you. But that's shifting forward a fairly long way.

08:30 **Do you remember any Aboriginal Australians?**

No Aboriginals no. Oh look, there was a man in the street who would have been part aboriginal and nobody would admit to it in those days. If you were to say to them or suggest in any way that they were Aboriginal they would deny it vigorously and probably want to fight you. And I remember that the son if this man who would have been quarter Aboriginal,

09:00 his name was Jack and as he became aware of his surrounding, you know say early teen years, he would never be called Jackie which he always was when he was a kid. There was no reason given but clearly it was because of the Aboriginal connotation. But no, I saw no Aboriginals at all, no full blood Aboriginals.

Why's Jackie aboriginal?

09:30 Well Jackie is sort of a name that's commonly applied to Aboriginal or black people. Particular Aboriginal yeah.

I hadn't heard of that.

Jackie? Jackie? Yeah. Well there's a very strong connotation of Aboriginalism in the name Jackie.

Was it a negative connotation?

Negative yeah.

Is that to insult somebody?

10:00 Well to down grade him. There's a better word for that but I can't quite bring it up. To denigrate him, yeah.

Now when you started work at the bakery you were about 13?

10:30 I was 13, yeah.

You'd been working there for some time after school and then you went to full time?

Went to full time work yeah.

How long did you work there for?

About two years til I was about 15 and they were nice people, they were very kind to me and paid me a reasonable wage, around about two pounds

11:00 per week. And they would very much have liked me to stay. I think the work I did for them was very satisfactory and I met some characters there that stay in my mind til today. The head cook was a Scotch man and by the name of John Jack, which seemed to me at the time to be a bit comical.

11:30 Seemed to be two Christian names but old John Jack he'd turn up for work on his little two stroke motorcycle coming down from somewhere around Preston and by lunch time he'd be quite intoxicated. He'd drink spirits from morning tea onward and he'd, by three o'clock he'd be hopeless and back on his motorcycle and home again. I'd stay and do all the cleaning up of course. But he

12:00 was a good fellow you know, a good fellow. I have fond memories of him. The owner was a fellow called Harry Craig and he'd been in business for many, many years and he was quite successful. Quite in my terms he was quite a wealthy man. I'd hear them speaking about going to live theatre and to the ballet and things of that sort you know and

12:30 it was way outside my circle of experience. And they used to make, there was a shortage of beer in those days, and they used to make their own beer. Even after the war there were still shortages. You couldn't get sugar or butter or tea or things of that sort but Harry had, because of his business he could get malt, he could get bakers yeast

13:00 and he could get sugar so he used to make beer. Not to sell but to share with his friends and to enjoy himself.

Did you have any yourself?

No I was too young to think about drinking beer in those days. They didn't offer it to me and it never occurred to me to ask for it you know but they would hold up each bottle to the light and you know pour it with great ceremony

13:30 and comment on it's qualities and occasionally the beer would explode and they'd store it under the staircase and occasionally there'd be loud bangs and the bottle would burst because they didn't get the ingredients mixed quite right. The home brewing in those days was a popular pastime because beer as a I say was quite short and it

14:00 was rationed and you wanted to by half a dozen bottles of beer you'd probably have to go to three pubs and plead a bit to get two out of each. Cigarettes were still short, they were kept under the counter. You had to have a special connection with the shopkeeper to get the sort of cigarettes you might want or get any at all for that matter. Everybody smoked in those days too. And petrol shortages persisted for years after the war.

14:30 I think it was all to do with the shortage of foreign currency and the unfavourable exchange rates that existed but fuel shortages persisted for a long time after the war finished and rationing still was practised you know. So there I am, I'm 15 and I've left Harry Craig and my mate Eck and I have decided that we'll

15:00 go work in the bush. Make some big money, send a little home to our folks and see a bit of life. We worked around for about two years.

What was your parent's reaction to this?

Mum was very philosophical. Dad had died by then as I recollect now. He died about

15:30 1946 or '47. He had heart trouble. Died at the age of about 55. It was common for men to die about that age in those days. There was no treatment for heart conditions. Loretta's father died about the same age. So yeah Mum was widowed and the kids were growing up.

16:00 And by then three or four of us kids were working and we were contributing to the family budget so things were nowhere near as desperate as they'd been. In fact we were tarting the house up a bit and you know, life was just improving for everybody by that time

16:30 but there was still plenty of work about and a great shortage of man power and you could get any job you wanted if you went around looking. Most of the men worked in shoe factories in those days and there were little shoe factories everywhere around Fitzroy and Collingwood. Every corner, if it wasn't a pub it was a little shoe factory and that industry's all gone now of course. Completely gone.

17:00 But yeah we went off working around the bush. We worked in the mountains in timber camps, we worked on sheep and cattle stations in the southern part of New South Wales.

Had you had much experience?

No you learn it by doing it.

17:30 And people would take you on because they couldn't get anybody else. We'd move on every month or two. We did seasonal work – we'd pick fruit, pick grapes, we'd whump wheat. In those days all the wheat was in big bags, about 120 pound bags and you'd stack them off the conveyer and the stacks would get

18:00 as high as a two storey building and a day a wheat whumping wheat really teaches you something about hard labour I can tell you. The bags come off at shoulder height and you catch them and you walk to where they'd be stacked and you dumped them. Naturally we didn't stay very long but you could get in and make some money quickly at the peak of the season when labour was needed. You could get good rates and we enjoyed it you know,

18:30 travelling around.

What sort of things did you do with your money?

It just went. No, it just went. You sent a little home and the rest just, I suppose we bought clothes and we didn't have motorcars or anything of that sort. I don't think we'd started smoking or drinking in those days,

19:00 or if we had we were only, wouldn't have spent much on it. But money just went. I don't know, it just went. We saved nothing and we'd take a break sometimes and spend a bit. Eck and I went to Sydney when we were about 16, spent a couple of weeks there. Hitchhiked up, roamed around the sights in Sydney and ate in restaurants and so on

19:30 which was a rare thing. To eat in a restaurant was something that only people on the high side of town ever did.

What was Sydney like at that time?

Well it as interesting for us. It was the furthest we'd ever been from home. So we wandered there, wandered here and wandered there like the man from Ironbark.

20:00 Banjo Patterson. We went to the beaches, we had a very long, hard look at Sydney harbour bridge; under and over and through. We went to three movies in three movie theatres in the one day one day. When Humphrey Bogart was at his peak and was showing at three of the biggest theatres

20:30 in the middle of Sydney. But we just did what boys did, we just went around looking and gaining some sort of experience I guess.

What year was this?

I guess about 1946. Yeah.

So you were around 16/17?

16/17 yeah.

21:00 **And your friend Eck was it?**

Eric yeah.

He was the same age?

He was a your or so older than me. But yeah we were about the same age. Wouldn't have been much difference. A year or so older. He died about ten years ago. Never quit smoking and it got him interesting he end, he got the dreaded lung cancer.

21:30 And yeah when we finished roaming we worked around Melbourne for a while as I mentioned at the tyre company working three shifts. Again I was earning more money than my father when I was 17, he was still alive then.

Was he still working at the….?

Munitions factory? No, no he got out of that and he'd gone back into

22:00 his own business. He used to go around as a hawker and sell things, often things that he'd make himself. He had a little patent hair waver that he used to sell to barber shops and the like. And it was just, he was just on the margin you know but I was earning more at the tyre company than he earned at the munitions factory and he might have still been there I think. It's hard for me to remember now,

22:30 to get it back into context. It's a long time.

As you say there was a lot of work available – why didn't he find something more profitable?

I think the manpower might have still been, the manpower was the government authority that controlled where you worked and who you worked for. They could direct you to work wherever they wanted you to work and I think it might have persisted for a year or two

23:00 after the war ended and he may have still been constrained to work in the ammunitions. Can't

remember.

But after that the hawking can't have been too lucrative?

No, no. And he'd drink it anyhow if it was.

He didn't want to work for anybody else? He was a ….?

23:30 He didn't want to work for, he was independent yeah. But in the earlier years he'd obviously done quite well. The depression, it knocked the stuffing out of him I think. It took away the opportunities that he'd had previously to make money and took away his enthusiasm and his motivation

24:00 to work. I think he was in his declining years in the times that I'm thinking about now.

Tell us about work at the tyre factory.

Well the Olympic tyre factory in West Footscray was an old dilapidated plant

24:30 owned by the Beaurepaires and in the part that I worked in, the moulding section was where they put the raw soft rubber tyre carcass into a heated mould to cure and harden the rubber and to put the tread pattern. In other words, finish the tyre off ready for dispatch. The equipment

25:00 was antiquated. They used what they called in those days watch case mould heaters, they were shaped like a watch and they opened like the old style fob watch used to but only in the vertical direction. Each moulder would start off with fifteen moulds to manage and work your way up. They were in threes

25:30 so you could go from 15 to 18 to 21 and 21 was about the maximum that anybody could operate but by operating more you earned a bonus on top of your salary and the work was hard and hot and heavy but extremely well paid and Eric and I both did it and we were pretty well top moulders. We'd

26:00 work our 21 moulds each and often we'd work because of the shortage of labour we'd worked an extra half shift. We'd overlap halfway into the next shift and they'd call the operator scheduled to take the third shift in early. Moulds operated 24 hours a day. But we weren't very conscientious workers. When

26:30 we'd earned what we thought was enough money we'd knock off and take a few days off and go to the beach and enjoy life a bit. But we stayed at it for perhaps 12 months and that's where we finally decided that we should look for something a bit more stable. Secure if you like. And that led us to think about the army.

27:00 **Why did you think that the army was going to be more stable?**

Well there was a lot of publicity about it. They were recruiting for the regular army and the ads used to say 'Learn a trade' or 'Get a career by joining the army' and if you'd left school at 13 like we had it seemed like a gold plated opportunity.

27:30 **Was it still like a fairly unsettled time after the war? People not quite settling down yet?**

Yeah I guess so. There was a lot of instability. People were moving around and times were changing rapidly. I can't put my finger on it but yeah

28:00 it was unstable. People were a bit like us, inclined to be erratic in their decision and inclined to move quickly from one thing to another as opportunities opened up. It was an unsettled time.

You and your friend were obviously both pretty fit young men and had affair bit of work experience and you had a wide choice of opportunities why didn't you

28:30 **just go and learn a trade?**

Well I guess there was no attraction in that for us. It's something that we were prepared to do. We didn't want to settle down.

29:00 I think that's the bottom line. There was that edginess, that unsettled state of affairs that facing up to something like a five or six year apprenticeship just didn't seem attractive. And while I say there was a lot of work around I wouldn't say there were a lot of apprenticeships around. Incidentally they were poorly paid also and they required a discipline such as attending

29:30 night courses at Technical Schools and so on all of which were not the lifestyle that we were really interested in. We were looking for the free and easy and adventurous lifestyle and that was what was in the air in those days.

So what was it really about the army that attracted you if it wasn't the trade?

30:00 Well there was still a certain amount of glamour around the military resulting from the war and well I don't know, it just seemed a good idea at the time. It seemed to us to be the logical next step you know, something we could do that would allow us to still live a lifestyle that offered the

30:30 opportunity to do things and see things and learn and gain experience.

When you say there was glamour around it – what was your impression of the men who had served in World War II? Did you know any?

31:00 Only on the margin. Somewhere in the [(UNCLEAR)] there were people around us, older people you know. When you were 15 or 16 or 17 people over 21 seemed to be very adult and they're not people you communicate with you know, you communicate at your own level.

So if it wasn't personal had you seen newsreels or did you go to parades

31:30 **or things like that?**

No, I can't recollect anything of that sort. We just knew that the army was, you know, there were uniforms and there were camps and there were a lot of men there you know and we liked the idea of being in a sort of

32:00 a group if you like. I don't know it's, decisions were made very much ad hoc in those days. Much, much different to when you're mature. Just on the whim of the moment you could turn around and do something like that or perhaps go in another direction. There was very little long term planning you know, long term didn't seem

32:30 to be the least bit important. Only the short term mattered and we said, "We'll join the army tomorrow," and we'd just go along and do it.

I don't think that's changed. I think young men are still the same.

Older people take a different approach to life.

Incidentally did you ever go to any Anzac Day marches?

No. No, never. No we weren't sort of imbued with the Anzac spirit

33:00 or anything of that sort.

What did you think of the idea of the British Empire?

Didn't think a lot about it. It was just there, it was the existing state of affairs and we just accepted as just being something that…

But did you see Australia as firmly part of it or did you see it as a separate country?

Very much as a part of the British

33:30 Empire yes. The map of the world had half covered in red in those days and we were part of that empire and we were sort of proud of it I guess yeah. There was a bit of heroic poetry and stuff that one learnt at school that sort of gave the feeling of pride and being a part of it. I think

34:00 of the, I don't know the title and I don't know the author but we learnt a poem that went; 'The Gatling's jammed and the colonel's dead and the sands of the desert are red with the blood of the square that broke'. Sounds like Longfellow to me but you know, heroism and national British Nation pride, yeah it was part of the ethos of the times.

34:30 **You mentioned that you were fond of literature – had you read many stories? Did you read a lot of books?**

Yes. I did but not of a highly cultural type. I read for general sort of knowledge of the world through novels mostly.

What sort of thing?

35:00 The first book I ever read was Robinson Crusoe and I think that started me on the path to reading. I can't remember titles I really can't but…

Did you read adventure novels?

Yeah, that sort of thing, yeah.

Far off places.

Yeah, yeah. And I could get through The Count of Monte Cristo in my pre-teen years. I mean I was a voracious reader.

35:30 Most knowledge you know comes from your early reading and my mother used to say I'd read the back of a tram ticket. Or the labels on the jam tins.

You mentioned before that you saw recruiting posters or recruiting films…?

36:00 There were recruiting posters yes and there were…

Tell us about the films and things that you saw?

Did I mention films? I don't really remember. Posters and maybe on the radio you know, 'Join the army, have a career, see the world, learn a trade' you know. They were the sort of things that one would hear in the round about sort of a way. They were just there and

36:30 you'd come across them you know. But our decision, my decision, I keep saying our because Eck was my mate and we did everything together in those days. My decision to join the army wasn't all that much influenced by those sorts of ads. Perhaps in the back of my mind but mostly we just as I said before we just wanted to have the lifestyle

37:00 and the opportunity for travel and adventure.

Tell us about joining up and how that process worked.

Yes. To join up in those days you went to the recruiting office in Flinders Street opposite the Flinders Street station. They had a recruiting office there for many, many years and after filling in the initial forms you'd go to the Royal Park

37:30 depot where you'd have a medical examination and fill in some more forms and give a bit of information about yourself. Have a psychological examination. And all that wouldn't take very long. You'd be, I think on the very day that we had those things done we were issued with uniforms and

38:00 we were in. And the next step was to go to Puckapunyal for what was basic training. It was for a period of three months and you'd learn to march and to handle weapons and the like. Physical training.

How did you find that?

Yeah good.

38:30 Enjoyed it very much. The living conditions were a bit rough – they were the old remnants of the Second World War old tin sheds and it got pretty chilly in Puckapunyal in those days. We joined up in April so we were coming into winter I guess. Yeah. Coming into winter. There'd be ice on the ground when you first got up in the morning but yeah it was good. We

39:00 enjoyed it and the training was good. It was interesting and it was educational.

How did you find the discipline and the regimentation?

Didn't bother me. No I was, I fell into line with that quite easily. As we speak about it I'm reminded that our basic training was interrupted after about

39:30 two months, we were two thirds of the way through basic training a massive coal strike occurred in the New South Wales coal field. It was to do with Menzies plan to ban the communist party, it was a big deal politically. And there were fears that there'd be riots in the streets – it was a real and genuine fear apparently among the officer class

40:00 and we switched from basic training to training to handle riots in the streets. I was a bit perturbed about it because the basis of the training was that in the event of riots the army would be called in and we were trained to from lines, carry rifles, at what they called the hide port,

40:30 advance shoulder to shoulder, push against crowds, use the butt of the rifle to crack heads. And thereby control riotous situations in the event that we were called out but the training was there to prepare us for it and we were also training…

Tape 3

00:33 **So you were at Puckapunyal – tell us about your training.**

We've talked about the basic training on an earlier tape but about two months into the three months training period a great coal strike occurred in a New South Wales coal fields. This was about May or June 1949. And there was a lot of

01:00 upheaval in the country and there was a fear that riots might eventuate so we switched from doing our basic training to training in preparation for any riots that might occur. Part of the training was to line up shoulder to shoulder carrying a rifle at what's called a 'high port', up on an angle like this and to use the butt

01:30 to crack heads if necessary. The training indicated that we would be required to control crowds in that way. Riotous crowds. A step further on from that we were trained to handle actual riots. We were instructed that in the event of a riot occurring and we were called to it an official would first stand

02:00 and read the riot act. Now I'd heard that said many times but it was reading the riot act was just some sort of a metaphor but it was in fact a legal procedure that they went through and the reading of the riot act apparently cleared the way for whatever action was necessary to bring the riot to an end. We were instructed that in the event of

02:30 a riot occurring and the riot act having been read we would then be ordered to fire into the crowds in order to break them up. Three rows, the order would be given and we practised it, rifle up to the shoulder, count of three, bang. Fire. And under no circumstances to fire over the head of the crowd – to fire into the crowd, particularly into the people who were at the forefront of the

03:00 rioting crowd. I was disturbed by it but you know I was in the army and it was something we were required to do and may have had to do. It never eventuated.

This was using live ammunition?

Live ammunition yes. The thought of firing into a crowd of Australians was quite disturbing you know. But the situation in the country was so severe, so disorganised that

03:30 the officials obviously felt that it may in reality be necessary. During this training it was decided that the troops would be used to operate the coalfields and the call went out, "Has anybody among the recruit training battalion had any experience in operating heavy equipment?"

04:00 I immediately put my hand up because I'd driven tractors and bulldozers as part of my bush work and the next day a group of about twenty or so of us came to Melbourne to Albert Park and began training in the operation of all types of bulldozers. They had them from monstrous machines down to medium sized dozers and we spent a week or

04:30 two happily pushing up piles of dirt and pushing them down again around a large paddock adjacent to the park barracks. And the fact was that we never, ever had a riot and we never, ever manned the coalfields but it was in the mind of the government at the time that the

05:00 army would have gone to the coal fields and taken control of them and operated them while the workers were out on strike. So they were troubled times.

So this was seen as a sort of communist sort of strike or a left wing strike or something?

I think it was the time when the then Prime Minister wanted to ban the Communist Party in Australia.

That would have been Menzies?

It was Menzies yeah.

05:30 And it never happened but he won the election, which was probably the primary objective and eventually he was not successful in banning the Communist Party. People felt that it would have been an intrusion on their right to free speech and free association. So that law never went through and I guess

06:00 eventually the workers went back to work because we went back training after a week or two of driving the bulldozers and never had the opportunity to put it into effect. But we were ready at a moments notice to pick up our gear and go up to round the Muswellbrook area somewhere in New South Wales.

What about your training after that regarding the Korean War? Oh hang on you went to BCOF first, that's right.

06:30 **Tell us how you got involved with BCOF.**

Okay well at the end of basic training when you're a new recruit in the army you get allocated. You graduate from basic training and you're allocated to a unit and I was offered a posting to BCOF, which seemed to me to be a golden opportunity – trip to Japan, occupation army -

07:00 seemed like a dream to a young man of 18. So yeah, I accepted that offer with alacrity and then I was off and ready to go. We didn't leave immediately, first I went to Sydney and was barracked at Marrickville which is an inner suburb of Sydney. I don't think the camp's there anymore but it

07:30 was quite close to the city – only a five minute tram ride out from grand central in Sydney. We waited around there for five or six weeks waiting to get shipped off to Japan.

Can I stop you there. Okay…

After about six weeks in Sydney it was time to go to Japan and we were to go by aircraft.

08:00 Now in those days Qantas used to operate the air service to Japan but there was a great shortage of aeroplanes and they were using old Lancastrian [Lancaster] bombers from the war in Europe. They'd stripped off the gun turrets and all the armaments and put seating for about 12 or 15 people on the planes. These

08:30 planes had four Spitfire type engines and were very, very basic aeroplanes. As a matter of interest, in the basement of the Memorial in Sydney at the present time on public display they are in the process of rebuilding one of these Lancastrian bombers and I was interested. I was in Canberra a few months ago and

09:00 was very interested to see it. You just realise how small and how basic these aircraft were. At take off

they went to the far end of the runway and all four engines were revved up in turn and the whole plane shook like an earthquake and the take off took many, many kilometres of runway to get off the ground.

09:30 Strictly no smoking because there were petrol fumes everywhere inside the aircraft and when it did get off, left the ground, it took a long time to reach cruising height. From Sydney the plane flew to Darwin where we stayed overnight, my first sight of the tropics and the

10:00 heat haze on the aircraft tarmac. Then we flew to Manila and there the aircraft broke down, something went wrong with the landing gear and we were to be there for two or three days. Manila was still coming out of the war time thing, they had internal revolutionaries of some sort. Police everywhere carried

10:30 machine guns on their beat and the whole place had the aura of immediately post war. The harbour was full of sunken ships with half of them protruding out of the water. I guess they've cleared it by now but it looked an impossible task in those days. But we were put up for our

11:00 stay in Manila at the biggest and best hotel in the city, the hotel Manila and something interesting happened at that time, there had been in Australia immediately before our departure about a Filipino woman who had several children and married an Australian. The children were not his, they were hers

11:30 and he wanted to bring her to Australia and the government wouldn't allow it because of the white Australia policy and the immigration restrictions. This situation had created a lot of interest here but even more interest in the Philippines because the feeling there was obviously that Australians were excluding them and keeping this

12:00 married couple apart and interfering with the welfare of the children and so on. And there was an absolute atmosphere of animosity towards us as Australians. We walked the streets in our uniform sightseeing as it were and we could hear the Filipinos pointing to us and saying, "Australians. Australians," you know in a way as though to say, "Them bastards," you know and

12:30 we weren't nervous because we walked in groups and we felt pretty cocky you know. We felt we could handle any situation that might arise so we didn't hesitate to go to any part of the city. But we were very much aware that there was this animosity towards us because of the immigration restriction on this Filipino woman. And it was

13:00 an interesting time. When the plane was repaired we flew on direct from Manila to Japan and we immediately joined 67 Battalion and took up residence in the battalion's base at Hiro in Japan, which is about ten kilometres from the city of Kure. Shall I tell you a little

13:30 about the occupation force in those days? Well the army being one of occupation was, it's main function was to mount ceremonial guards and to always look as though we were the victors of the war. Otherwise we had to be well dressed, well presented, well turned out.

14:00 All spit and polish as they say in army terms and never, ever to be seen by the Japanese to be anything other than first class troops. It was forbidden to fraternise with the Japanese, you couldn't socialise with them in any way or have any dealing with them other than commercial dealings, shops and so on.

14:30 You couldn't eat their food, you weren't supposed to go near their women, mainly because there was always the threat that venereal disease was rampant – I don't know whether it was or not but the threat was always there. And life day by day in the barracks at Hiro was one of parades and training in marching and drill and guard duties.

15:00 We had no real weapons training or war training of any sort except that we had a separate training camp at a place called Haramura about twenty miles distant and the battalion would go there accompanied by company twice a year and spend three or four weeks in hard battle type training but for most of the year life was quite luxurious.

15:30 All our laundry was done for us by the Japanese. We were quite well looked after in terms of accommodation and laundry and meals and that sort of thing. Leave as limited, you couldn't just leave the camp whenever you wanted to. You had to apply if you wanted to leave the camp and there was a curfew, everybody had to be back

16:00 in by midnight. You might only get a leave pass til ten of o'clock and leave meant you either, if it was a four hour pass as far as you could go would be the little township at Hiro which as I say was a kilometre away, a couple of miles. There was

16:30 no means of transport, one had to walk there and walk back again.

So you were in Hiroshima?

Hiro. Hiro was a little… Hiroshima was about thirty, forty kilometres distance. It of course was the city that suffered the atom bomb attack.

Were you ever stationed there?

No but we visited occasionally when on leave you could get the train from Kure to Hiroshima and go see the

17:00 sights and there was still all wreckage you know from the atom bomb. All the major buildings had been destroyed and most of the shops and residences were things that had been put together quite hastily and mostly of a temporary nature. But life went on there, you know it was thriving little city despite the recent history of the atom bomb attack.

17:30 The battalions other responsibility was to mount guard duty in the city of Tokyo so one company at a time would go to Tokyo and mount guards on Australian installations there. The Australian embassy, the commander in chief's residence, General Robertson was the commander in chief, we'd mount a guard on his residence. Our own

18:00 barracks which were in a place called Ibusu just out of the city and we'd do ceremonial parades in Tokyo. Just sort of showing the flag to the Japanese I think. Just to, keeping foremost in their mind that they were an occupied country and not part of the winning side. There was an amusing incident occurred on one such

18:30 ceremonial parade I should perhaps tell you a little about it. Well it was decided that the whole battalion would go to Tokyo for the Queens birthday, I'm not sure when that was, it might have been late 1949 or early 1950. Probably 1950, think it occurs in April. The parade was to be held on

19:00 a massive open area immediately in front of the Emperors place. The Emperor's palace was a large enclave that was still occupied by Emperor Hirohito. They allowed him to stay in power at the completion of the war so as to bring order to the country. The parade required some special

19:30 drill procedures, complicated marching procedures that required quite a lot of training and we spent weeks and weeks and weeks training in preparation for this great parade that was to be held on the Queen's birthday and everybody was, particularly the officers were very excited about it and they were determined to get things just so, so. Part of the ceremony was that we would do an open review

20:00 and then an advance in review order which meant that you'd have three lines each of 200 men stretched out and they would advance 21 paces to the beat of the drum and then all stop at exactly the same time so the lines perfect. Now it's a pretty complicated drill procedure but we trained and trained and trained for it and then the

20:30 idea was that we would fire what they called pardon my French but a Feu de joie and I believe that means the fire of joy and it went something like this; bring the rifle to the shoulder and on the command bang! Fire. Get down, reload, up again, bang! Fire. The whole battalion was to fire a single shot at exactly the same time three times in a row.

21:00 Blanks, no bullets, just blank cartridges. Make a loud bang. So we're all fired up for the big parade and the first thing we have to do is march on from the side of the parade ground. Now because we were very much under strength at the time, the battalion had nowhere near in it the amount of soldiers that it should have had to make up the numbers

21:30 all the cooks and the bottle washers and the truck drivers and the clerks were all pressed into service and put into ranks. And their marching skills were somewhat less proficient than those of the better trained soldiers, the regular infantrymen. I should tell you that we had a particular marching tune that is the official

22:00 marching tune of the 3rd Battalion. It's proper name is 'Our Director' but the boys called it 'You're a pack of bastards' because they had a ditty that went to the tune and it went something like; - can we use the word bastards? Well the words to the song went something like this; sung to the tune of 'Our Director' – dah dah dah dah dee

22:30 Good tune. Great marching tune. Great marching tune. And it was absolutely tradition that the troops would sing to the song 'You're a pack of bastards, bastards are we, we'd rather [(UNCLEAR)] than fight for liberty'. Okay? Good ditty and a great marching tune. So we're about to march on with all the cooks and the bottle washers and

23:00 the truck drivers in the ranks and they're playing some obscure marching, the bands playing some obscure marching tune and everybody got out of step. Fatal. Absolute disaster. They couldn't pick up the step. It wasn't right, they lost it and didn't look like recovering it. The 2IC of the battalion Major Ferguson was seen and heard to be

23:30 racing towards the band screaming at the top of his lungs to overcome the out of step situation 'Play Pack a! Play Pack a!' Pack of bastards so the band got to the end of the next bar and immediately swung into – [sings] and every one of the troops knew the words and knew the tune and bing! They picked the step up in a moment and marched on in great order. Turned from a disaster to perfection in a split second

24:00 simply by switching the marching tune. But the memory of the dignified 21C, the second in command of the battalion running across the parade ground screaming at the top of his voice 'Play Pack a! Play Pack

a!' will live in my memory forever. Anyhow the parade went on, we performed the advance in review order, open ranks. We

24:30 fired the feu de joie. They played 'Pack a' again and we marched off in good shape. A memorable day, Queen's birthday. I think 1950 on the plaza in front of the Emperor's palace.

Was the Emperor present?

He'd have been in the palace. Whether he was peeping through the holes in the wall I don't know. I doubt it very much. The only audience was a few Japanese and a few dignitaries.

25:00 But the spirit of the thing was good. So that was guard duty in Tokyo. Which as I said before we performed on A Company by company basis twice a year and of course the troops always looked forward to being the company that was on Tokyo duty because that was where it was all happening.

Tell us about your social life in BCOF?

25:30 **How you fraternised with the Japanese, that includes the sex life of the soldiers in Japan and what you got up to.**

It was forbidden to associate with the Japanese. Fraternisation was taboo. And leave was restricted so you didn't have very many opportunities in any case to fraternise with the Japanese.

26:00 The battalion was made up of the old soldiers who'd gone straight from World War II up to Japan and had been there ever since. Many, many old soldiers stayed on and made a life for themselves in Japan. They didn't want to come home you know. And the other half of the battalion was made of these

26:30 fresh faced young recruits that had been sent up with my crowd to reinforce the battalion and bring the numbers up to something like full strength. The old soldiers by and large had formed relationships. They had regular partners, they had a house somewhere and some of them even had children. They were living a regular married life outside the barracks. Everybody knew that

27:00 but nobody acknowledged it.

So this was taboo but they still did it?

Yeah but they did it anyway and nobody did anything about it. On the other hand the young people, young guys that came across and bear in mine we were coming from an Australia that had no contraception available or very

27:30 little and no, absolute tight restrictions on any relationships with the opposite sex and I'd say that including myself most if not all of those guys were virgins. They might have got a touch here and there but there was no fulfilling or regular sexual activity amongst any of them you know.

28:00 Nor had they had any sexual experience. The road from the camp at Hiro, the barracks at Hiro to the town of Hiro was a distance of about a mile and a half, two miles and if you had a few hours leave you'd walk to Hiro because there, there were shops and there were bars and there were people

28:30 who would sew badges on your uniform for you and you know you'd get services and you could buy stuff so that's where you'd go. Halfway along that road was what was commonly known among the troops as a road block. There'd be a group of young ladies soliciting the troops as they walked by and generally they'd get ignored as the troops left the camp to go

29:00 to the local township where they'd have a few beers and spend a bit of their time and their money but on the way back the temptation to stop and take up the favours on offer was always well very tempting and I think most if the younger guys that I'm talking about had their first sexual experiences at the road block on the road to Hiro. But many of them didn't form any sort of relationship

29:30 like the old diggers. There was a very distinct schism if you like between the two groups. I mean we were all friendly and communicated with each other, but we lived different lifestyles. The young guys wanted to get ion the booze and live it up a bit and the older guys in the permanent relationships would quietly go off to their partners and spend their time there. So yeah, that's how

30:00 the social side of things worked. Occasionally you'd get an invite to a Japanese home. I remember one occasion for some reason or another, I don't remember how it eventuated, I went to a traditional Japanese dinner, feast if you like, where they cooked what they called a Sukiyaki and served sake and we had a wonderful night communicating with them. Sitting around their

30:30 burner, they have a burner in the middle of the table with a big bowl and all the food goes in the big bowl and one helps oneself from it and washes it down with sake. I remember that night with great pleasure but I and I'm sure most if my associates had very little social interaction with the Japanese people. Pranks, yeah well we used to razz them a bit. You know

31:00 we used to take particular pleasure in insulting the policemen, the Japanese policemen had practically their only role… I mean the Japanese people themselves were very law abiding, they had no need for

police really but the police would mostly do traffic duty or stand on corners and just be evident you know. Available to ask how do you get to so and so or you know, directions.

31:30 So if the boys were in a playful mood they'd do things like buy a German sausage and walk along the street and knock the policemen's hats off and give them a bonk over the head with the sausage. Confident always that the policeman would smile and out his hat back on and move out of range. And even sometimes the good citizens would be upset

32:00 by getting a bit of a razz up off the diggers who would give them a playful nudge you know. But there was no animosity between the Japanese people and the soldiers, none whatsoever. There was no danger in the streets, you could go out anyway. You never felt intimidated or threatened in any way. When the Japanese lost the war and were instructed by their Emperor to

32:30 totally surrender they obeyed that implicitly and they never, ever or never to my knowledge and I'm pretty sure it's general, never, ever got into any sort of violent situation with the diggers.

What about the black market? Tell us about that.

The black market, yeah. Well the only currency that was used in the occupation in Japan in the British sector which was,

33:00 the Americans had a separate sector, the British had it's own sector used a currency that was printed for the purpose of the occupation and to be used. Currency controls worldwide were fairly stringent at that time. You

33:30 were paid in this occupation currency, it was called BAFC – British Armed Forces Currency. BAFC. BAFs we used to call them. There were ten shilling notes and pound notes and there was some sort of coinage and a BAF was worth twenty five shillings Australian but if you had a million of them you couldn't bring them home with you and be a millionaire you were only bringing home waste paper.

34:00 It was only viable in the British area of the occupation. If you wanted Japanese yen you had to go to the money changers in the street and they'd give you about a thousand yen for one BAF pound and given that our wage after having made allocations to our parents back home the wage was around about three pounds a week I think

34:30 of which we got twenty five shillings or so, about one BAF pound in our pocket. A reasonable sum because a pot of beer was thruppence in our own bars you know. But you asked about the black market. The Japanese were short of everything, absolutely everything and we had our own stores where things that were available to us

35:00 were not available to the Japanese. Soap, washing powder, coffee, tea, sugar, things of that sort. Commodities. Totally unavailable in the Japanese market places but freely available in our stores. So you could get your wages at the end of the fortnight, two and a half/three BAF pounds, go and spend it all on commodities, walk out of the gate of the camp and somebody would be there waiting

35:30 for it to buy it from you for double what you paid for it. No problem. In Tokyo the market was so sophisticated that one could buy the merchandise, I should say that around the Ibusu camp barracks in Tokyo the wall was about ten feet high, the surrounding wall and couldn't get out the gate.

36:00 But such was the level of trust between the Japanese buyers and the Australian sellers that you could walk to the wall, shout out and get a response from the other side, throw the bag of merchandise over the wall and the person on the other side would throw the bag back with the currency in it and nobody defaulted. There was absolute trust. But there was no point in trying to make a fortune

36:30 out of the black market. The only purpose of it was to increase the amount of spending money that you had to spend outside the camp premises. So you didn't do it more than once or twice, the labour wasn't worth the outcome. You could fill your pockets with Japanese yen but all you could buy was cigarette cases or lighters or little knickknacks that in the way of mementos and things. They had no other merchandise and most of this stuff was hand made.

37:00 But you could buy beer and you could buy time with the lovely Japanese lasses if you were of a mind. That you paid for in yen. But you could be as wealthy in yen as you were prepared to put time into the black market.

How much would it cost to get a Japanese girl?

500 yen was the going rate. That's about a dollar 25 in today's money.

37:30 **Not very expensive.**

Not very expensive no. But bearing in mind that wages and that were, sometimes it was possible to evade the curfew or maybe sometimes a digger would be so desperate that he'd be prepared to cop the penalty for evading it and you could stay all night with a girl for a thousand

38:00 yen. Yeah. But…

And did many do that?

Oh yes. Yes. Once they broke their maiden, once they lost their virginity it just became part of the routine that you would drink four nights a week and perhaps go looking for a girl on the seventh night yeah.

38:30 And as Rudyard Kipling once wrote, he said, “And if sometimes our conduct isn’t all your fancy paints, remember single men in barracks don’t grow into plaster saints.” Kipling. So we were, they were a rough and ready crew of guys as you’d expect.

39:00 **Tell us about what a magpie tendency is?**

A magpie tendency.

Yeah, you had some sort of codes there?

Look some of the guys in the occupation yeah, were magpies. They would collect, the ordinary diggers like us, the young guys, we lived for today and maybe tomorrow but next week, next year was

39:30 too long for us to even contemplate. We weren’t interested in it. Some of the guys who were a bit more mature were taking a longer view and were trying to accumulate things of value. Now for instance you could buy Australian currency at more than it’s face value but giving BAFs for it. If I had five BAF pounds,

40:00 no if I had five Australian pounds I could probably get ten pounds BAF which is more than double the face value of the Australian pounds but those guys having worked the black market and converted the yen and then converted it from yen back to BAFs would buy Australian pounds and magpie them. Store them up. And they’d buy, you know the digger had a decent watch and wanted

40:30 money as they often did living for today not tomorrow those guys would always be wiling to buy those things. There were only a few of them about and we knew who they were. They were the traders, I can mention his name because he died in Korea, big fellow called ‘Lofty’ Goebel. Rather like Goebbels. He was a magpie, he had,

41:00 we all had a steel trunk at the foot of our bed where we were supposed to have our personal possessions, a lock up steel trunk. And ‘Lofty’ had his full of all sorts of treasures that he was going to bring back to Australia when he finally repatriated.

Tape 4

00:33 Yeah girls married very young and so did the younger men. Because relations between them were very much well constrained is the only word I can think of to describe it. It’s almost impossible to understand how deep seated the restrictions were in those days between the sexes.

01:00 So where are we? I was telling you about ‘Lofty’ Goebel and his treasure chest. He was one of several and very briefly because we might get to him later when we talk about Korean experiences he died very early on in the war. In fact he was right next to me, he was on my right hand side and we were advancing in an attack across some paddy fields towards some hills that we wanted to capture and all these Koreans were firing down on us and ‘Lofty’ got shot right through the head and

01:30 [(UNCLEAR)] I was deeply shocked because I knew him well and he was a good friend and he was just unlucky. He just copped the wrong shot in the wrong place. Died instantly. And of course I could do nothing but carry on with the advance you know. We had some objectives to achieve and you don’t stop once you start to move in. You keep going

02:00 whatever happens. Yeah, ‘Lofty’ I heard later, I don’t usually repeat what I heard, I try and speak about only what I know but I heard later that his chest and the chests of many others including my own were all rifled, because they were put into storage when we went to Korea and they were supposed to be in safe storage but they were all rifled and whoever got his got a treasure chest.

Other Aussie soldiers did this?

02:30 We don’t know who did it. I don’t know. I just know that mine was empty and I was told that ‘Lofty’ Goebel was empty too because we were all aware that it had [(UNCLEAR)] in it. But it wouldn’t have been one of his own men you know. It wouldn’t have been one of our crowd, it would have been one of the base people of maybe the Japanese. I don’t know.

When the Korean War broke out tell us where you were and what happened.

03:00 Well we were in barracks in Japan and, at Hiro, and one bright morning the word went out that there’d be a full parade. Each company had it’s own parade ground and on ordinary days activities only that, the company would exercise on it’s own. To call a battalion parade, in other words, to bring all the companies onto the big central parade ground was always an event. So we didn’t know it was going to happen but

03:30 the parade was called on the big parade ground so something was going to happen. And we knew the Korean war had started and was I the background. At that time the, to go into war you had to volunteer. You weren't, you couldn't just be

04:00 sent without volunteering – it was one of the rules of engagement [(UNCLEAR)]. So this parade was actually called and eventuated to get the troops to volunteer so here we are all lined up on the parade ground standing to attention and the CO comes out and addressed the parade and he says something along these lines; this was Colonel Walsh, he said, "This battalion

04:30 has been ordered to join a battle in Korea. Australia will have a battalion in action and it will be the honour of this battalion to accept that assignment," and he more or less said, "And it's voluntary and any lousy low down lily livered skunk who doesn't want to come

05:00 march out now and stand over there." And of course he didn't use those words but the inference was that if you didn't want to go you weren't a true member of this battalion and you didn't have the right spirit and so on. So by not falling out you automatically volunteered. Not a man fell out. We say fall out, that means step out of the ranks and move to the side. So what followed was they set up some desks and

05:30 each man got in a queue and signed the papers to say yes they volunteered for action in Korea. So they got 100% response. Mainly by appealing to their loyalty and their manhood. But actually the boys by and large were pleased. I mean we were soldiers, there was a war, boy, this was an opportunity. You don't think of the down side, you think of the upside.

06:00 **How did the deployment take place?**

What happened for there. Yeah well we went into more intensive training in Japan and the battalion was down to about half strength. We only had about 400 men I think. Back in Australia they started recruiting, they started a recruiting drive saying anybody whose already had military experience is invited to join and with a minimum of training like a fortnight or something immediately go

06:30 to Japan and join the battalion which is going to Korea. So within three or four weeks we started seeing these ex-World War II diggers turning up. Coming mostly by plane. By then they were using bigger aeroplanes, they had some Constellations then and they could carry about 50 men. It was a big step up from the old Lancaster bomber. And

07:00 our strength gradually built up and while this was happening we got into more intensive training in Japan, we went to our training camp in Haramura and did simulated war training and we got new weapons and things to bolster our strength but we were still using World War II weaponry. And the

07:30 numbers eventually built up so that we had near enough to a full battalion. Four rifle companies, a support company and a headquarters company. About a hundred in each, that's around about 600 men I suppose. Should be 1000, you know we didn't have all the ancillary services. A very small group effectively. Look, there could have been as many as 800 but it was a group about that magnitude. On around about the 26th or 27th

08:00 of September we got an old American Liberty ship, the Aitkin Victory, Victory ship and sailed across to Korea and when we arrived in Korea there was no further training. We were ready, we were what they call 'battle ready', we went straight into the action. We had people killed in action within the first seven days of our arrival.

08:30 We landed at Pusan in the southern tip, brief historical note, the United Nations forces had been driven into what was known as the 'Pusan Pocket'. The South Korean army had collapsed, the Americans had very inexperienced troops and very small numbers anyhow and they'd been pushed all the way south from South Korea and forced into

09:00 one small pocket around the city of Pusan and they were defending that fiercely because otherwise it was a bit like Dunkirk, they'd have to go over the water. MacArthur with a brilliant stroke of generalship, outflanked them, he sent landing ships up the south coast to Seoul and landed successfully landed there and cut off all supplies to the North Koreans who had already stretched their lines of supply

09:30 and their manpower and they completely broke up and went into full retreat. So as we arrived the North Korean army is heading north back to where they came from and our job was to catch up to them. We got a truck to a city called Taegu and from there we got a ride on one of these massive great freight planes that the Americans had. You can drive

10:00 trucks into the body of them you know and the whole battalion flew from Taegu up to Seoul which put us somewhere near the back of the retreating North Koreans. We camped alongside the airport, Kimpo Airport just out of Seoul and the aeroplane activity there was something to behold. They would take off and land four abreast across the airstrip, the fighter planes

10:30 and land in the same sort of formations rather then one at a time which would have been too slow for the activity because they were intensely harassing the retreating North Koreans with their air power. So

we're trying to catch up with the war, we get up to Seoul and then we joined the – there were two English battalions there – the Argyle and Sutherland Highlanders had one battalion – they'd come across from Hong Kong and the Middlesex

11:00 regiment had one battalion and 3 Battalion joined into them to, from the British Commonwealth Brigade, 3 battalions, one brigade and once we formed that brigade we were an independent fighting unit and we started to go up the East coast towards North Korea. We advanced almost every day,

11:30 just meeting some sort of token opposition and knocking it over as we went. Occasionally we met some fierce opposition and had to put in full scale attacks but we kept advancing. We quickly crossed the 38th Parallel, the dividing line between North and South Korea and boy by the end of October, within six weeks of our arrival we were in Pyongyang the capital of North Korea and from there

12:00 we kept going North and we went right up to the Yalu River on the dividing line between North Korea and Manchuria and then the winter came and man did it get cold. They had the coldest winter in Korea for god knows how long and the wind came down off the Manchurian plains and almost froze us to death and we still had fairly basic parade ground type uniforms you know.

12:30 We'd acquired the odd piece of cold weather equipment but most of our gear was still surge material. The sort of overcoat you'd wear today if you went to the city and when they got wet they stayed wet for a week. We got some cold weather gear – big boots, big think socks,

13:00 and protective over-clothing in the way of trousers and jackets and hoods and caps you know and we were able to live through the cold weather.

Was your battalion the first Australian battalion to be in Korea?

Oh yeah. The first and only for the first two years yeah.

13:30 Because we only had three battalions in the whole Australian army and two of them back in Australia wouldn't have been at half strength. Our commitment was for one battalion - that was all we had. We had some navy ships in the sea off Korea and we had an Air Force base in Japan from where they used to fly across to Korea and do their thing and

14:00 fly back the same day you know. On one mission.

Can you tell us about your first combat experience?

My first combat experience…

Whether it be a battle or a skirmish…

I can't remember where it was. It might have been Uijongbu but we were first major experience. I mean there were skirmishes

14:30 along the road you know and mostly we knocked them over fairly easily.

When you say knocked them over – can you tell us a little bit more detail about what these engagements were like?

The enemy would try and delay us. They'd occupy the highest ground adjacent to a road and they'd try and hold that ground because they can from there fire down on you and you can't use the road because if you try and

15:00 bypass them they'll harass you with fire and injure the troops. We would often move on trucks. The Americans would supply us with trucks to move along the road. If we didn't have American trucks we'd walk. But if we were harassed in that way we would attack that position and drive the enemy off the hill and [(UNCLEAR)] the army says 'Kill the enemy. Kill the enemy'. What does a soldier do? Kills the enemy.

15:30 You'd kill them if you could.

You had a .303 rifle then?

303 rifles. I carried a Bren gun. The organisation of a battalion is that at the very bottom of the organisation is the section. Te section is ten men, a corporal's in charge and he would have eight men with rifles and bayonets, he'll have two men with Owen guns – that's a miniature

16:00 sub-machine gun for close range action and he'll have one Bren gun which is a heavy weapon that fires .303 bullets over a range of up to a mile but it had a very rapid rate of fire and it's a very effective machine gun and a bloody heavy one too I can tell you. You carry it over your shoulder and you know you've been carrying it.

16:30 But the bigger guys were always given the Bren guns, that's the bottom line, because the little guys couldn't handle it and I was 6 foot, almost 6 foot 3 and 12 stone and so I carried the Bren gun. The Bren gun in an attack would always take the flank so they could protect the line of men that were advancing with him, he could fire across with his machine gun across the line of advance and

17:00 it would be worn with a big sling around your neck taking the weight of the gun so you could manoeuvre it in any direction. You could also lay it down on the ground on a bi-pod and in a defensive situation you could use it in that way but at this stage we were always on the advance.

When you were advancing you said you were in trucks – the leading elements of the advance – what was supporting the leading elements of the advance?

17:30 **Were they armoured personnel carriers or something like that?**

No. No, no.

Just trucks?

Yeah. They would, you see the enemy was in retreat and they would send a jeep ahead of the convoy of trucks. I didn't say we were always in trucks, we walked a lot of the way but if we were going to make a major advance a fleet of big

18:00 GM [General Motors] trucks would turn up and like cattle trucks you know? Not much room to do much else other than stand in the back and high rails on each side like in a cattle truck and we'd get perhaps 20/25 men to a truck and we'd move up to the next position. Probably we'd have forward scouts would have checked out to see that things were clear but the enemy

18:30 might let the jeep go through that's checking the road and when the trucks come through he might open fire on them. So we had a number of skirmishes like that but one day you ask about the biggest action and we out in a battalion attack, which is again like the battalion parade, a battalion attack is a big event. My personal experiences in that attack were that

19:00 we were in trucks, we were driving along the road, we stopped, instructions came down that there were some large hills on the left hand side of the road, long range of hills that the enemy as there in force and that we were going to attack them. And to get to those hills we had to go from the road across about half a kilometre of open paddy fields. We put two companies – you'd

19:30 advance in a long single line with two more lines of troops behind, three ranks advance. Two companies, probably 60 – 80 men in each of the lines and we'd move across the ope n paddy fields, we can't do much with our weapons there because we can't really see the enemy but he's sitting up there with his machine guns and he's trying to rake us.

20:00 And I remember clearly seeing the lines of bullets slicing into the mud across the line of advance where he's trying to get his range right. He'd be swinging his medium machine gun trying to mow down the troops. Miss. They only get a few you know. Because we advance six feet apart and with say twelve feet between the ranks, it's pretty hard to

20:30 pick up a single man even though you're using a heavy machine gun. Then you've got to climb up the hill and while you're struggling to get up he can sit up the top and try and pin you back. So you know it's fairly difficult to make an attack like that and we lost a few people going across the open paddy fields and we lost a lot more when we hit

21:00 the top of the hill. One who stands out in my mind is Lieutenant Larson who was in charge of the next platoon to mine, he was a real gung-ho young Lieutenant and he charged up with his men with his pistol in his hand and got shot dead before he reached the crest. My big mate 'Lofty' Goebel that I mentioned before lost his life during the advance across the paddy fields and I saw his head split.

21:30 Because as I also said, you don't stop. You keep advancing.

I'd almost like to get like literally like camera type image description of this advance – it's real interesting. When you were advancing through a paddy field I would imagine you'd have a lot of water..

The paddy fields were dry, they dry out at certain times of the year. They flood them during the summer when the rice season

22:00 is in full swing and then they drain the water out and reap the rice and what you're likely to see is bundles of straw, they've already headed the rice you know. No, the paddy fields were dry but they had a mud base. You wouldn't sink into the mud, it was firm. As we advanced across the paddy fields the ground was firm because of the time of year.

So you had cover with those bails?

No. No cover, absolutely open all the way.

22:30 **So when you were advancing in this sort of single file, were you with the first line or the second line?**

I was in the second line. Second or third. There were troops ahead of me. I have to sort of get the picture back in my mind. I remember the big highlights of the day you know. And you just keep doggedly advancing and you know you don't stop.

23:00 Once the attacks on, you're in you know.

When you say advance, the picture I'm getting is that you're walking through with your .303 holding in your hand and standing upright in a paced walk. Is that an advance?

Yes.

But you're not ducking?

No, no, look there's no point in ducking. You're not going to make any less attack,

23:30 you walk upright, you walk at a rapid pace and when you get to the hill you scramble. And when you get to the top you engage the enemy. By the time I got to the top of the hill the enemy was in retreat. I was firing at their backs as they ran away. They broke and they ran fortunately. But they were determined to hold until we were at close quarters with them.

24:00 **What happened when bullets raked past you? Did you have any near misses?**

On that day I didn't hear them. If they go past them you get the loud crack you know. If they land in front of you, you don't get the noise because you're not… There's two noises, there's the noise as the gun is fired and there's the noise as the

24:30 bullet goes past you. They're different noises you know.

Were they tracer bullets?

No. They weren't using tracers.

So what would happen when you're advancing through this paddy field, you get bullets whizzing past you, does that make soldiers duck to the ground?

No. No. You advance, you advance.

So you stay exposed?

Yes.

Did any soldiers…?

25:00 Not to my knowledge no.

…react adversely to this?

No. You mean did they duck, did they refuse to advance? No.

Or at least duck out of self-preservation?

No, no. They advanced all the way. I'm not saying that out of any sort of heroism. It was just the spirit of the battalion. The competitive spirit, pride in the battalion and well, training first

25:30 you know, you'd know what to do, how to do it and what you must do. Secondly, pride in your unit and thirdly, competition with the Poms because they were gung-ho too, they would go in hard. There can be battalion actions that you can be here and the action can take place over there. You can hear it, you can see it sometimes but you're not involved in that.

26:00 And other times you'll be involved in the action and others won't be. It's not always every man committed to every action. And if you're defending and you have your defensive position allocated to you, you sit up there, you dig in, and no matter what happens to anybody else you stay there. If they get over run down there, that's not your problem, someone else will look after that. You defend what they call your field of fire, that's your area. Nobody's to go past that.

26:30 And I've seen them over-run at one end of a feature in a defensive situation so they bring up the reinforcements, always have some reinforcements to back up and then they push them in there.

How did you react to your friends death when you were walking through the paddy field?

Look I felt shocked but I accepted it as part of the game.

What was going through your mind?

27:00 I was shocked. Look, I was engrossed in the attack anyhow and involved in it and he died and I said, "Christ!" to myself you know, "Lofty's dead," and then back to the attack. I can't explain it any other way than that. You know there's a single objective and your life and the life of all your mates depend on it. You can't do other

27:30 than go on with it.

What were you feeling after that outside the shock, towards the Koreans?

I didn't feel angry with them. No, no, no. Never felt angry with them. I remember later in the day, as

one talks, memories come back you know, later that day towards evening

28:00 a friend of mine said, “Let’s go look and see if we can find anything.” Things had settled down, we’d driven the North Koreans off the hill. There was fear of a counter-attack but we’d set up you know and we were in the reserve, that’s to say my section was in the reserve. I’ll mention here that we keep one in reserve if a counter attack comes, if they get over-run – bang! – we go in and we try and regain that ground. My friend Ron Tully in fact,

28:30 he’d dead now, said to me, “Come on, we’ll go walk.” He was an old digger so I sort of followed him like a dog you know and there were rows of dead North Koreans in a re-entrant and Ron to my sort of disgust started searching their bodies, what he really wanted was pistols. Every digger wanted a pistol you know, they’re not on issue,

29:00 you don’t get a pistol, only the officers do but if you can get one it’s sort of a trophy. And one of the Koreans that he approached was lying doggo in other words he wasn’t dead, he was lying with the dead in the hope that he’d be overlooked. And as Ron approached him he pulled the pin out of a grenade and

29:30 he didn’t throw it, he just held it and it blew and blew the contents of his head out and some of it landed on my mate Ron Tully. And he was so shocked he never went into battle again. Nerves were shattered from that single episode. Now from time to time, I wasn’t aware of it at the time but people wouldn’t

30:00 be seen anymore. People that you had seen around every day in your day to day duties were there and then maybe a guy would be gone. What was actually happening was his nerve had gone and they’d take him out. The officers used to watch for it I think.

So Ron was an experienced World War II soldier?

Yes.

How were the World War II vets seen by the younger chaps?

Yeah they were good. There was a good relationship between them.

30:30 They liked us for our youth and enthusiasm and we liked them for their maturity and their experience. It was a good combination of people. I formed some particularly good friendships with those guys you know. Big Snowy Cook comes to mind, he was later a judges leprechaun, you know the fellows that wear the green coats in the high court. In Canberra and a friend of mine who loves in Queensland, still a good mate

31:00 of mine today, Ted Bosworth, got the military medal at Maryang San and he and I keep in touch and we meet up from time to time. In his eighties now, but they’re friendships that lasted 50 – 60 years.

So what was the average age difference between a World War II vet and a new…?

Well to be a World War II vet you had to be 23 or 24 years old you know. Probably 25 because the war finished in 1945 and we’re talking about

31:30 1950 and you had to be at least 18 to join the army and if you had any experience you’d be 19 and you add five and that brings them up to 24, 25 years of age.

So most of them were sort of mid to late twenties?

Yeah.

The ones who were the other ranks that is with the exception of NCOs and all that?

Yes. The average age, look there were the young guys and there were the older guys you know

32:00 and the older guys were in their mid-20s, maybe as high as 30, some of the sergeants and WOs [Warrant Officers] were older than that because they were long term serving people. The young guys like me were 19/20 years old.

So was it sort of like a father--son type relationship?

No. It was a man to man relationship. Just good friends brought together by extreme circumstances.

32:30 **In a battle situation how would the World War II vets help the younger vets like you guys?**

You don’t help each other. There’s no opportunity for you to do that. Well, if you were wounded perhaps. But once you’re in the battle, once you’re in it, you’re on your own. You’ve got your position, you’ve got your role to play and you play it.

33:00 There’s no opportunity for one of these guys to come up and say, “You’ll be right son,” or, “Why don’t you hold your rifle like this,” or anything like that. There’s no opportunity for that to happen. If you’re going to get guidance from them you’re going to get it in quiet patience round a campfire when things are quiet.

So sort of like an unofficial debrief?

Okay yeah although there was no such word as debrief in those days. Nobody thought of it.

Oh so you didn't debrief after an operation?

33:30 No, no. Just went straight on. It became so routine, it was just another day at the office. Sometimes it was a bit more intense, a bit like when you go to the office, some days are quiet, some days are intense and there's a medium in between. Early on in the war we unintentionally

34:00 captured 2000 North Koreans. I don't know if you've heard about that? My company, B Company, just met up with them on the road and they surrendered and here we are, less than 100 men in B Company and we've got 2000 North Korean troops with trucks and all sorts of equipment.

So they were fully armed?

Yeah. I understand, it wasn't my personal experience,

34:30 but I understand they thought we were Russians and they were delighted they said, "Oh the Russians have come to help us," you know. When they realised that we were UN [United Nations] forces there was a brief skirmish and then they just simply surrendered. Now, I missed it. I slept through it. I went to sleep, we used to always dig a trench to sleep in.

35:00 It was only one night [(UNCLEAR)] dig a trench so that you had some sort of cover in case artillery fire came in or in case there was an attack. Sleeping in the bottom of my slit trench a guy comes and says, "Wake up. Your turn on guard," which was routine. I sit up and here on the road adjacent 2000 North Korean soldiers sitting on the road with their hands on their heads and the truck lights on them to watch them. My mate Big Rod

35:30 Gray, mate of mine, good friend of mine, he was a scavenger, he was one of the magpies and these North Koreans, one of their wagons was full of money, currency, bank notes. Worthless. And when I arrived at this scene some of the diggers were casually burning all this money, there was a bloody great big fire made

36:00 up of bundles of currency. And my big mate Rod Gray, he was a big fellow, he grabbed a lot of this and packed it in his haversack and took it with him. I said, "Rod it's useless, it's worthless," he said, "It might be worth something somewhere along the road. I'll take it." Carried it around with his for three months. And you didn't want to carry a pound more than you had to in those days because you know a lot of the

36:30 time everything you owned you had on your back. Yeah Rod scavenged the money. Okay, so we've got the prisoners, that's early days, that's a well recorded historical event you know. Same thing happened to the English, they picked up a couple of thousand too.

About the World War II vets also, tell us about this camp fire sort of conversations you'd have about battles or something. What sort of advice

37:00 **would they give, would they pass on from their experiences with the Japanese for instance?**

No.

Like practical tips for firing or things like that.

While we were young we were too mature for that sort of fatherly advice you know. I guess what they brought to the aura of the situation if you like as a sort of a maturity that was greater than ours or mine if you like.

37:30 I mention a campfire only because when we could we'd light a fire, try and get some warm food into us and get a bit of comfort and heat. Couldn't do it very often but when there was a fire it was a sort of social situation and everybody would come around and have a chat but no, they wouldn't offer advice. That would have been out of character for them entirely. They wouldn't sort of say, "You do this with your gun," or, "If you

38:00 advance in this sort of a way…" That wasn't part of the ethos at all.

What about the officers? Did they offer advice?

Never saw them very much. They were an enclave in the remote distance. The situation in a platoon of men, there are 30 men in a platoon, three platoons in A Company. Each platoon would have a sergeant who was an experienced soldier, usually mature aged person, usually around 35

38:30 and he in turn would have a young Lieutenant probably fresh out of Duntroon, probably 21 years of age you know. Quite callow but the officers would go off to the information groups, meetings and they would come back to their company and tell their sergeants what was happening and the sergeants would talk to the men.

39:00 There was a divide between the officers and the enlisted men. Often the sergeant would be a mentor for the Lieutenants but officially he would be the commissioned officer, he would be the ranking person.

But no, information down the line was very, very meagre. Very meagre. You hardly knew where you were or what was happening or what was going to happen. It'd just be a

39:30 matter of, "Pick up your gear we're going this way." "Get ready we're going up there." Simple as that.

What about – a sergeant of course is an NCO…

Yes

… the warrant officers which are higher than sergeants?

One per company. One warrant officer per company and he usually is in what they call the B echelon. He comes at the rear and he handles things like food, ammunition, water, transport.

40:00 Day to day necessities.

Administrator…?

Administrator yes.

I see.

Tape 5

00:35 **You wanted to take us back to Broken Bridge?**

Yes before our lunch break I talked about a battle that took place at Pakchon and I omitted to mention that that's where the commanding officer of the battalion died, Lieutenant Colonel Green. He's well remembered but prior to that battle and in the same location around Pakchon an action occurred known as the battle of the Broken Bridge because

01:00 in order to get to the battle area we had to get across a river where one of the segments of the bridge had seen sabotaged and it collapsed. And the reason I want to talk about that was because it was during that action that my lifetime friend that I mentioned earlier Eric Roberts, was severely wounded during that action. He

01:30 was shot through the chest in a close encounter and my most vivid memory of it is as he was being carried out on a stretcher he was sitting up and bemoaning the fact that a new battle jacket that he'd just been issued with a day or two before had had a hole shot in it. That seemed to be his major concern and but we sent him off, wished him

02:00 well and he made a good recovery and he actually came back and rejoined the action. He came back to Australia for his recuperation and for treatment and insisted on going back and rejoining his mates in the war in Korea and he saw it out to the finish and survived but they never, ever removed the bullet. He went to his grave with it still somewhere in his body. It moved around apparently, apparently it's a medical fact that they

02:30 once a bullet's lodged in your body it can move from the point of entry into some other part and keep moving. So yeah he carried it for the rest of his life as a little memento of the occasion.

Was it near his heart?

Through his chest, right hand side, hearts on your left isn't it? Right hand side yeah and it didn't go through which meant probably that it was a small arms bullet like not a .303 rifle,

03:00 that'll go right through you every time but probably, the Chinese carried a lot of small automatic weapons that had very rapid fire. You've probably heard it before but they were commonly known among the troops as burp guns. Burp. And the reason they were called burp guns was because the fire from them was so rapid that it would sound like a burp. Let me see if I can do it: burp. And with that he'd let a spray of five or six bullets go. Round magazine. They used to frequently jam which was

03:30 one factor on our side you know but they were deadly at close range and you're sure to hit something if you let five or six bullets go in one burp you've got a pretty good chance that one of them is going to strike something. Rather like a shotgun fire. Yeah so Eric had the bullet lodged in his chest and he had a hole in his new battle jacket and got a trip

04:00 back to Australia and as I say came back again. There was this tremendous loyalty among the members of that battalion, it was unthinkable to them that they could not support their mates. We saw that during the battle of Kapyong during which a number of the members had during a break prior to the battle had gone to Tokyo for a weeks leave and when they heard that the battle was on they were hammering on the door of the barracks insisting that they be sent

04:30 back immediately so they could support their mates rather than holidaying in Japan. Tremendous spirit of comradeship and support. Wonderful thing to experience and be part of.

Can you tell us more about the battle of the Broken Bridge? Obviously Eric got hit but what was actually taking place during the action?

05:00 There was total confusion. We crossed the bridge just on nightfall. The enemy were scattered about on the far side of the bridge that we crossed to. We had no idea where they were. We were stumbling over them in the dark and they were stumbling over us. An enemy tank came on the scene and some of our boys knocked it out. They weren't very big or powerful tanks, knocked it out with one of our small anti-tank weapons.

05:30 And it rained and rained and rained all night. It was just total confusion. And during the night more of our people lost their lives but never in a front to front confrontation. We never got organised into sides. We were just stumbling about in the dark in the rain and making the best we could of it but the enemy withdrew and we held the land and that

06:00 was the outcome we were looking for. But I made a note during that day and that night we had eight killed and 17 wounded and you know that was a pretty poor result for us particularly as the gain was so small and the organisation was so unfortunate. And that's about all I remember about it. But I do know

06:30 that a little mate of mine Snowy Blackett was only about ten feet away from them and I didn't hear an enemy all night and I didn't fire a shot all night and he was dead the next morning. How it happened I don't know.

You saw action very quickly after you arrived in Korea and after a fairly easy time in Japan to come straight

07:00 **in and be baptised by fire must have been very tough?**

Well we went through a very tough training exercise in Japan for six weeks or so prior to departure and we were already well versed in drill and weapons, you know handling weapons and firing weapons and so on so we had a good base there. We were certainly toughened up at Haramura prior to departing for Korea. We did battle exercises in very rough

07:30 terrain and we climbed steep hills and fought mock battles you know group A against group B of our own people and on one occasion we did a forty mile route march with full – forty miles or forty kilometres? Not sure but a very long march from Haramura back to the barracks. A really testing experience you know.

It's still a different thing when people are actually getting killed.

Oh absolutely, absolutely.

08:00 **How did it effect you - you had fairly high losses?**

We did, right from day one. Battle after battle, minor skirmishes even there'd be friends killed by… After, there was a further battle called, well the boys called it the slippery slope, it's gone down in history like that because there was a great ice slide on this ridge of mountain that was very, very steep and

08:30 ended in a pool of ice at the bottom. When I moved up to take part in that action A Company had already been in and there were half a dozen of their members dead at the bottom of the ice slide. They'd got to the top of the hill, been shot down and had careered down the hill along this great long strip of ice. I'd never seen anything like it before. It looked as though it had been man made but in fact it was just a freak of nature. And as my group moved up to

09:00 support that action we were moving in single file to get along the track and I saw these A Company guys lying with their eyes open and dead at the bottom of the slope and I think that was the day that effected me the most. I was never really, I'm no hero but I was never really fearful about going into action

09:30 and I wasn't apprehensive about losing my life but what did happen to me after that day and after a whole series of actions that we'd been involved in over a period of some five or six months leading up to eventually the Kapyong was that the number of people that we'd lost killed and wounded, I simply fixed in my mind that there was no way I was going to survive this. I was certainly going to get killed sometime

10:00 in the near future and I was quite resigned to that and that really helped in a way because I wasn't feeling hopeless about it but I was feeling philosophical about it you know. I'm not going to survive it, I'm here, I've got a job to do. I'd better do it the best I can. But it did cause me to suppress all emotions and for years after I was unable to freely

10:30 express emotion of any sort because I'd bottled it up so tight during those months you know. So many of my friends lost and so many badly wounded and people, really they were my family you know, it was a very tight knit community a battalion like that and you know most of the men in it personally. I can look at their names today and look at the names of 500 men and I remember all of them. And we

11:00 lost so many so constantly and confronted the situation so often that as I say I resigned myself to my

fate. But not in a negative way, never in a negative way however on the day of the battle of the slippery slope that looked like being my last day because this was a very, very steep razor back ridge and where A Company had been knocked off - they'd attempted to take and been knocked off at,

11:30 so many killed and wounded that they had to withdraw and my company, B Company, were called up to take over from them and it was enough of a task to scramble up the side of this very steep ridge but when we got up the top and had a peep over the ridge was so narrow that there was just a walking track along the top of it that the Korean civilians had obviously been using for hundreds of years. No more than three foot wide you know and

12:00 the difficulty that A Company had run into, their was an enemy machine gun nest right on the track. They couldn't get it with artillery because the peak was too narrow, they only way they could attack it was to come along the track and to do that you're in single file, easily picked off, impossible to press the attack home. We scrambled up to the top of the ridge by about 4.30/ 5 o'clock in the afternoon,

12:30 and the word went along that we were going go over the top, we were going to attack this situation and try and neutralise it. At this stage we're still on the side of the ridge peeping over the top with the machine gun opening up every time they saw a head pop up and as I say to attack it we would have had to go up like that and then along in single file and that looked like the end of

13:00 it to me. I thought, "Well the minute we go over there we're going to finish up with the A Company guys at the bottom of the slippery slope." However, the day wore on and no doubt the officers conferred and consulted each other and in the event we didn't go over the top. We stayed on the peak of the ridge but just below and I actually slept for half the night, spent the other half on watch as it were

13:30 and the next morning the sun came up bright and early and we stepped up onto the track and the enemy had gone. Withdrawn without any further bother. A lucky day. Yeah I remember.

You said - as the afternoon wore you didn't go over the top – was that because

14:00 **you were just not willing to go over the top yet or because…..?**

Oh no. We were waiting for the order. If the order had cone we'd have gone over. No questions, we'd have gone over. I mean there wouldn't have been any second thoughts about it – that's what you did. I don't think it would be done nowadays but in those days if you were ordered to go no matter what you personally thought or how you felt you'd go.

14:30 And you'd expect your mates to do that same. But yeah, we were allowed to stay where we were for a few extra hours and it made all the difference. So yeah that was the slippery slope and you asked me was I affected. I was effected most of all, or at least the peak of my reaction to the

15:00 loss of friends was when I saw those guys at the end of that slope. Such an awful death, to be shot down and to career down a steep ice slope and fall in a heap at the bottom and then we were just walking quietly by in single file to go take up their positions.

Were there many dead?

There were half a dozen at the bottom of the slope but I took a note of how many died that day and I've got in my note,

15:30 - my eyesight without my glasses is not great – yeah there we are, 12 killed in action and 31 wounded. 12 killed and 31 wounded. I see that one of the wounded was a fellow named Carmichael. He was a good friend of mine. His initial was A, I don't know what it stood for, but he was universally known as Hogey inevitably

16:00 and Hogey after he recovered from his wounds and came back to Korea was selected as one person from the army together with one person from the Air Force and one from the Navy to go on a tour round all the countries that were contributing to the United Nations effort in Korea. So he got a world tour and got feted all the way around.

16:30 He had a good second half of his service. And I met him after 40 or 50 years at Anzac Day in Sydney a couple of years ago and I said, "You're Carmichael! Hogey" "Yeah!" he was a big tall slim fellow like myself but these days he's a big bulky bald headed fellow. He was chosen, I think among I'm sure many other reasons as well, but you know he was a big tall upstanding person and a very handsome

17:00 man feature wise and I think that's what they were looking for, ideal representatives of the country to carry the flag. Yeah, he got a world trip.

Did they have different ones from different countries?

I believe that there were others. Each country that had forces in Korea selected some of their people and they went as a group. World tour, went all around America and several countries in Europe that were involved.

17:30 Because there were about twenty different nations you know involved in the war on behalf of the United Nations.

Did you have much to do with the other groups?

No.

You were in a battalion for a while with Scottish highlanders though weren't you?

Well we formed a brigade with the two English battalions one of which was the Scottish Highlanders and that was our military formation if you like. I mean a single battalion on it's own couldn't survive.

18:00 The minimum military configuration is a brigade of three battalions and we formed the 27th British Commonwealth Brigade when we joined up, I mentioned it earlier, with the Argyle and Sutherland Highlanders and the Middlesex Regiments. Both battalions having come across from Hong Kong where they were on garrison duty.

18:30 **During this time when you were out in the field what were your living conditions like? You said it was like the coldest winter that they'd had in many a year – where were you staying?**

Yes. Well let's just pick some highlights. We never washed or showered for more than three or four months. Never changed our underwear,

19:00 usually had constipation from being too cold to take a crap. Rations that we ate most of the time because we were always on the move, we were either heading up towards the border of Manchuria or we were furiously retreating when the Chinese came into the war but we were always on the move. We were eating American field rations. Each day each person would be given a small carton with three cans of

19:30 food in it. Maybe beans and ham and maybe corned beef hash, something like that plus some packs of biscuits and some coffee envelopes. Packet of cigarettes, a roll of toilet paper and a little can opener and we'd have a little tiny can of what they called canned heat which was more or less congealed methylated spirits and if all else failed you

20:00 could snip the lid off and light it and you'd get a little blue flame from this tiny little can and you could hole your can of food over it and it would heat reasonably well through after a fairly long period of time. Later the boys, not our boys, but I know the Canadians found they could make an alcoholic drink out of the canned heat and made a real mess of themselves. Some died. When I much later woke up,

20:30 I'd been unconscious three days in the Kure Hospital with pneumonia and when I woke up the guy in the bed next to me, the first thing I saw was a bottle on the floor with some black viscous looking fluid in it with a tube running up under his blankets and he'd survived drinking this concoction of canned heat. But the other trick we used with the foodstuff, I mean eating is part of living conditions,

21:00 we developed a special technique for heating cans of food. These were small cans. Just enough for one man to make a meal out of it and you'd cook it and eat it when you wanted to do it. And we found the best way to heat them was to simply make a severe dent in one side of the can but not too severe, we knew just how hard to hit it and then

21:30 throw the whole thing in the fire if you had a fire and watch it and when the built up steam inside blew the dent out it was time to grab the tine out of the fire and open it up and you'd have pressure cooked food inside it so it was… We were ahead of the pressure cookers that became part of the every day household years later. After about four or five months a shower

22:00 unit set up and we were trucked down to it, big tent, big steam generator, rows and rows of showers inside this big tent. Stripped off all your clothes, threw them into the rubbish heap, went in and had a shower and a good clean up and a complete new set of clothes and oh boy that was a great day. A great day. I think that must have been four or five months after we arrived.

22:30 We were through the winter so we were back into say February or so of 1951 and so you know personal hygiene amounted to nothing much more than washing the face and the hands and a shave. We shaved every day, there was never any breakdown in that sort of discipline. Usually with melted snow, handful of snow in an empty food can.

23:00 Put it on the fire, get a little bit of warm water and away you go. We were introduced to shaving cream that we'd never seen in Australia, the Americans had it and occasionally one would come up in a comfort package you know like a tube of toothpaste and you could just simply spread it on your face like a cream and wet your razor and shave it off. I think it's fairly common now but it was new then. So that's clothing, bedding, well whatever

23:30 we had to sleep in we carried. So the nights were pretty cold. We'd never undress, most of the time we wouldn't take our boots off because you take them off the next morning but never during the night because you never knew if there was going to be a flare-up in action. I mentioned the Manchurian front and I remember this night I felt pretty secure things we were pretty quiet and I took my boots off. My partner and I were in a slit trench facing towards the

24:00 north just waiting for the enemy. I think some of historians recall it as the twenty one frozen days. There was snow everywhere and we'd retreated and we were waiting for the Chinese to come and try and push us further back. Yeah I took my boots off and my buddy in the meantime had gone over the top of

the ridge to the rear where there was a fire going and I knew there was a fire there and

24:30 I couldn't get my boots on. You lose the feeling in your hands. If your hands get really cold you can't grip you know. You lose the grip and these boots used to come up to here. A rubber foot piece and then a leather upper. And inside them we'd wear big, thick woolly socks and there'd be a felt pad and an inner sole that would absorb any perspiration so you had to get them off once every 24 hours to dry the perspiration out and then

25:00 back on they went you see. So I'm stuck on the wrong side of the hill with two foot f snow on the ground and the cold wind blowing from Manchuria knowing the guys have got a big fire on the other side of the hill and couldn't get my boots on. I could not get… I was almost in tears you know with the frustration of needing to get these boots on and trying to and couldn't. And I never did get them on.

25:30 Eventually I just had to grit my teeth and jump out of the trench barefoot and charge through the snow before my feet could freeze and over the hill to safety by the fire. Dry out the boots and warm up the feet and get it all together again. Just a little sideline on the living conditions. You'd usually wake up in the morning with a boot full of moisture from perspiration you know and you'd need half an hour or so to dry them out so you could get moving again.

26:00 But they were good boots supplied by the Americans. They were waterproof and good fitting and hard wearing and very suitable for the terrain. That's food and clothing, bedding, bedding. We carried a sleeping bag, the thickness of an ordinary blanket, zip up front and then a semi-waterproof over-cover over the top of that. And that's what we… oh and we carried a ground sheet.

26:30 That's what we'd sleep in and on. Full clothing, sleep in your clothes. That covers living conditions? I think it does.

Were you just on the ground or in the trench?

Nearly always, nearly every night for that first six months we would dig in a trench but then as the weather froze up it got harder and harder to break the ground. We had minimum tools.

27:00 Just little trenching shovels and it became very difficult to get into the ground in which case you'd gather up rocks and try and build up some sort of defensive position with those. Some sort of cover you know in the event that you have to defend and to get out of the wind.

Very comfy.

They were young healthy fellows you know and nobody suffered any

27:30 severe health problems because of those conditions. In fact, what I learnt from it is you can live through some pretty harsh circumstances and quite comfortably survive it. As long as you got food and water and something to cover yourself of a night. My Mum always kept a letter I wrote to her. I mentioned in the letter that I hadn't had a bath or a shower for three or four months and then I made the comment, "Good warm stuff dirt." In other words I was saying that dirt

28:00 keeps you warm. She quoted it to me many times later in life. She thought it was very funny.

From a mother's perspective.

So I guess after all this furious activity leading up to Kapyong we went into a rest area. The word went out that we were to have two or three weeks

28:30 well behind the lines where we could relax, strip off, it was spring time, we went to this lovely spot of think green grass by a flowing stream in a very gentle valley. We were able to put our little tents up which we were hardly ever able to do. They were called pup tents. Each man would carry half of it and you'd share it and you'd button the two halves together and with a couple of little extended stitches you'd make just a little,

29:00 just fit two men inside. Both put your ground sheets down, hop in your sleeping bag and you could be, I mean that was hotel luxury to us. And we were able to relax and walk around without fear or without any apprehension of any sort so it was very, very relaxing and we were going to be there for three weeks and as I mentioned earlier some of the

29:30 boys were sent to Japan for a week in Tokyo which was unheard of. I think we'd never heard of any… Never thought there'd be any such thing as leave like that. We thought we were in for the duration you know. I wasn't one of those selected but the first group went and were back and the second group had just left. The first group came back with some wonderful American bourbon whiskey, which was

30:00 freely shared amongst all the troops and led to a very friendly evening. The second group had just gone when it was decided that, well the order came through that there'd been a breakthrough and we had to go and stop the enemy at Kapyong. And so we were back in the action before time. Shall we talk about that now? Okay. So we move up,

30:30 on a moments notice we packed our gear and moved up to Kapyong. We'll fill in a minute I'll just tell you briefly about the card came we had during this relaxation period. We used to play blind poker in those days and everybody got into a school somewhere. Well not everybody but everybody in my

company which was 100 men were in small groups of half a dozen or so playing blind poker and as the groups, as one man emerges the winner of all the money in that group he'd

31:00 move to another and so on and it finished up with only three persons after a couple of days of play left with any money whatsoever. I was one of the three and we were playing for BAF money, BAF pounds worth 25 Australian Shillings each in the days when wages were about three pounds per week and I had about 380/390 BAF pounds at the end of the game.

31:30 We three couldn't wipe each other out. We played together, we kept playing for about a day. Big Bill Buckley and a little guy called Lenny Bird and I, we had all the money. So here I an with a roll of BAF pounds in my pocket worth probably close to 500 pounds, 1000 dollars Australian – a fortune in those days but of course it was no real consolation because there was nothing that you could do with it you see.

32:00 There was nothing you could buy, nowhere to go.

That was almost enough to buy a house in those days.

I guess it would have been yes. We brought our two houses in North Fitzroy for about 40 pounds each.

In what year?

Before I joined the army. So in

32:30 late 40s. There was rent control right and they couldn't put the rents up and we were paying about I don't know about 12 or 11 shillings a week I think. And somehow or other the owner through the agent offered it for sale at about forty pounds and my mother and her sister brought one each. They were sort of a matching pair you know. They were pretty dilapidated I tell you.

33:00 Anyhow so here I am, I've got 1000 dollars odd and nowhere to go and the word came out that we were to go and take up positions at Kapyong which we drove about fifty miles up the road. We thought it wouldn't be probably very much you know, just another day at the office so we moved up. The officers indicate to the sergeants where they want the troops; some up on the high ridge on the right, some on the ridge leading to the rear,

33:30 and some on the lower ridges on the left hand side of the road. I'm on the left hand and I'm facing to the east. Now these adjoining hills, formed a bottle neck in the road and any major force coming down the road, going south would need to pass through that bottle neck and we had the high ground and we could stop them you see. And it's our job to hold them for as long as we can

34:00 until everybody gets reorganised and gets into proper defensive positions because they were caught on the hop. But I thought nothing much was going to happen, we dug a slit trench, set our weapons up on the parapet, defined our lines of fire and our area to defend,

34:30 and the sun began to set and the nest thing we know down the road comes the biggest stream of refugees you've ever seen in your life mixed in with thousands of South Korean soldiers who'd dropped their guns and run. And they're all streaming through down the road between our two hills and we're very suspicious that there's not some Chinese amongst them you know. But we can't tell. Anyhow in the event a few hundred Chinese did go through with

35:00 them and got behind us and controlled the road further back so we effectively were cut off. And during the night the main Chinese force arrived and tried to knock us off the hills but they were unsuccessful. We had some tanks supporting us, which was a good thing, some American tanks and the battle went on all during the night. A Company carried the brunt of it, they lost a lot of people that night.

35:30 They were almost wiped out. They almost lost their position but they counter-attacked and got it back again and my company, B Company, was heavily attacked on the north facing slopes but they never, ever came around to my side on the east sloping face. They were moving around at the bottom of the hill but they never, ever attempted to attack us up the hill so I had a fairly easy night you know. Within sight and

36:00 within earshot or a stones throw from me the two major battles were going on; one on the right side of the road and the other on the left had side of the road. And when the sun came up the next morning there were no further attacks. The Chinese went to ground because they know that we've got aircraft and artillery and stuff and we can belt the hell out of them when the daylight comes so we weren't seeing them. They were there

36:30 but there was no battle going on. And the word came through that we had to hold out for another night and that looked a bit difficult. So we dug our trenches a little deeper and started to settle in but by about 11 or 12 o'clock in the morning further word come through that we couldn't get resupplied. We were almost out of ammunition, we had no food, no water and the road was blocked behind us and

37:00 we couldn't, they couldn't get any supplies up to us. And we'd have to withdraw our own way, go over the hills.

How large was the Chinese force?

Difficult to say but they were always in very large numbers but very poorly equipped. They would only have rifles, they would very seldom have any sort of artillery or heavy machine guns or anything of that sort.

37:30 But their strategy or their tactic was to attack in waves, human waves and they'd say, "Well if we send 1000 we'll get 200 through and that'll gain us the position." And all you could do was beat them back you know, just use up all your ammunition and try and knock them back. Certainly there were a lot of dead Chinese in front of A Company and a good few in front of our company, B Company.

38:00 Through the action during the night and that was the main action. That was the main defensive action. Later the Chinese went around further to the right and tried to come up behind A Company's position but we had D Company up on the ridge and we still had C Company in reserve. This gets a bit confusing with A, B, C and D but here we are, B Company on the left of the road, A Company on the main ridge on the right, D Company up on the high ground and C

38:30 company sitting behind in reserve waiting to come in and reinforce wherever necessary. So the Chinese when they couldn't get through the road and they couldn't go round to the left they tried to go round to the right and D Company were up on a very high hill and very hard to attack and they held their ground all right. The Chinese gave up on trying to beat A Company - they lost too many men there. And they never really did put any serious attacks on our side on B Company.

39:00 But out of ammunition, out of food, out of supplies and cut off in the rear and we had no alternative but to, well the officers decided I mean to withdraw. So we, the first thing they said was, "B Company withdraw across the road and leave your positions and

39:30 come up behind D Company," so we did that. We packed up and B Company en masse or in orderly groups moved across the road and I was in the last group going across. As we moved out we could see the Chinese coming up and occupying the hill but there was no sense of trying to pick them off, they weren't attacking us, they were simply taking over the ground. Well we were half way

40:00 up the ridge to join D Company on the high ground where they were under attack when the battle commander received an order I now know that they changed their mind, they were going to try to get supplies up to us by tank and they wanted us to desperately hang on for another 24 hours. So the order came down to us, "Turn around and go back and re-capture the land that we'd vacated to the Chinese." That's

40:30 what the soldiers call a stuff up. And to make it worse there was a very large slit trench in the low ground and the Chinese that had got past us had occupied during the night so if we're going to go up and try and recapture the high ground they're going to be firing on us from the side and it's going to be devastating for us. Somebody estimated that there might have been a dozen Chinese in this trench so we

41:00 were ordered to make what's called a sectioned attack. Ten men, one Bren gun, eight rifles, a couple of Owen guns. So okay, we turned around from our climb up to D Company and charge up the weapons and begin to advance on the slit trench. We're actually going downhill to it because it was in the low ground. Ten men, spread out ten feet apart and

41:30 the Chinese there started firing on us and the Chinese up on our vacant hill started firing on us and we were ordered to charge. So we charged. We were walking advancing you know and when you're charging you run and try and get right up close. We were getting pretty close to the Chinese and we were still advancing at a run

Tape 6

00:31 The morning of the 24th at Kapyong after holding the line the night before and how we were ordered back to recover the ground that we'd surrendered to the Chinese and then diverted to putting a section attack against a low-lying trench and my section was in attack. We charged and we began to get shot down. I remember my good friend Gene Tunny on my right

01:00 falling in the advance and then my big mate Rod Gray on my left went down, shot through the chest and the bullets were cracking, as they go past you, you can hear them cracking you know. Because they sort of break the sound barrier, it's louder than the crack of the weapon firing them and it seemed to me that there were so many bullets coming that it was like walking, running into

01:30 a very stiff breeze. And I knew that most of the section had been knocked and out and by this time I'm within ten foot of the Chinese trench when bang! Something hit me. I didn't know what it was. It just absolutely blew the legs out from underneath me and I crashed to the ground carrying this bloody great Bren gun and all the ammunition in basic pouches and so on, I'm carrying about eighty pound of gear and equipment.

02:00 And I'm sprawled out on the ground there and I know I've been hit and I don't know where. And I can

hear the Chinese talking to each other in the trench because the attack then had subsided. It was over as far as we were concerned and as far as they were concerned. And I'm thinking what they're saying to each was, "Will we shoot these guys in the head and make sure they're dead?" because we'd be thinking the same thing. So the thought occurred to me that it might be a good move to try to get out of there.

02:30 But I wasn't sure whether I could get up and I certainly wasn't sure whether I could walk or run. Anyhow when you've got battle gear on you've got a clip on your belt and everything's attached to the belt and you can just unstrap the belt and just shuck all the gear. Everything will come off and fall away from you. Except the Bren gun, which is on a sling across my neck so with a great deal of speed and agility I slipped the Bren gun slip

03:00 off my neck and unclipped the belt and jumped onto my feet and then I realised that where I'd been shot was through the right thigh so I sort of hopped and skipped and jumped and well, made me, retreated rapidly in that manner. And fortunately after about 20 or 30 yards I was able to dive down below a low mound. Meantime the inaccurate Chinese are taking pot shots at me trying to

03:30 stop me yeah. So there we are, we're most of the section blown away and we've had a close look at this trench and we can see there's about 70 or 80 Chinese in it. Not the 8 or 10 that we expected and we're pinned down because they've

04:00 got covering fire from the hill we'd vacated the night before so nobody's moving, everybody's pinned down and we're back to square one where we started from. Anyhow, after a short interval a whole platoon, 4 platoon got organised and they put in a proper, systematic, well planned attack and they wiped out the, killed the 80 odd Chinese in the trenches. They lost a couple of lives in the action and,

04:30 but they wiped them out you know. And then the medics were able to come in and help our wounded. Rod had been shot through the chest, Gene Tunny had been also shot through the thigh, they were shooting low, I don't know why. But nobody died in our attack. In our section attack, even though the whole section were wounded one way or another, they all got away with their lives. The worst injured in the

05:00 attack was our, a young Lieutenant had just joined with us and taken charge of the platoon, a fellow named McGregor and he'd been in the civil army, the CMF back in Australia and he'd asked to go to Korea for war experience and he came across and he, although it wasn't his duty to do so, he followed our section attack in to back us up

05:30 and a stray bullet or at least a bullet flying around because there were plenty of them, hit his in the jaw and smashed his jaw to pieces. He had it wired up and was fed through a tube for months afterwards back in Sydney. Yeah B Company wiped out the low lying trenches. Killed all the Chinese in it. And then the order comes through that they've changed their mind again and we weren't going to

06:00 recover the land, we were going to totally withdraw. It's obviously communications were going on between the officer on the site and the senior officers in the rear. So the battalion began to slowly withdraw in single file and fight defensively along a long ridge leading to the south up on top of the mountains, they couldn't go out by the road. However we had about 30 or 40 wounded blokes in a little valley and they

06:30 weren't going to walk over that mountain. And nobody was too sure what was going to happen to them. But we'd all had a good dose of morphine so we weren't too concerned you know. It relieves you of all the worry. And in the event, I mentioned that we had some tanks helping us to defend the position overnight and these tanks had a fairly large deck

07:00 behind their turrets. Nothing much to hang onto but a good flat area that was a sort of a radiator area over the top of the motor, the motors in the rear, and our people convinced the tank commanders very much against their wishes, to convince them that they should take our wounded out. And somehow or other they got all of our wounded people, and there were 30 or 40 of us, loaded up on the back of the tanks and

07:30 once the battalion was up on the slope and safe from further attack from the Chinese the tanks intention was then to turn around and go as fast as they could down the road, head south. It was pretty rough road and the Chinese were scattered all along it, they were able to take pot shots at us as we went by but one way or another we all managed to hang onto the deck and got back behind the lines.

08:00 And then my memory gets a bit vague and then the next thing I know I'm in what's called the Indian Field Hospital. They had a tent type hospital back behind the lines where they were taking the wounded for the first treatment, rather like the MASH hospital [Mobile Army Surgical Hospital] in the TV series only it was run by the Indians, nice people. Now my personal experience there was that I was treated there and then taken back to Japan and treated in the Kure Hospital in Japan but

08:30 in talking about the retreat I should mention that, probably others have mentioned it, but there was a very unfortunate event in that we were being observed by a spotted plane for the American Air Force and these little spotter planes used to fly around like hawks in the sky just circling around watching the action on the ground and if they saw an enemy they would fire in a long smoke streamer, pinpoint the

09:00 spot on the ground where the enemy were. The idea was that then somewhere further back there'd be planes in the air and they'd call those planes in and they would strafe and bomb the area and they'd use fire bombs, napalm which would be a tank full of jellied petrol with a detonator in it when it hits it just goes up in a massive ball of fire that sucks all the oxygen out of the air for a hundred yards around.

09:30 General arrangement was that we would carry three brilliantly coloured panels, each about twelve feet long and every day they'd change the configuration of the panels. In other words you might lie them parallel with each other or they might be crossed or they might form the letter H or form a triangle but there was an arrangement signal to every unit so that if the spotter plane was seen in the air the panels would be laid out on the ground.

10:00 Our boys seen the spotter plane and they laid the panels out but the panels weren't seen by the spotter and he put a marker in and within two minutes the American fighter planes came across and dropped napalm bombs. Some of our people horribly, horribly burnt, and they had to be carried out because they were already up on the ridge and they couldn't come back down to the road you know. But that happened while we were waiting in the re-entrant, watching them pull out the wounded

10:30 without knowing what was going to happen to us. The next minute we know our own boys on the top of the ridge have been hit by friendly fire. So that was a very nasty event and very well emotionally disturbing. And I had another very good friend, a fellow named Ron Dunque, he was a medic.

11:00 You have a ceremonial band, music band when you're in barracks but when you go into action the bandsmen become stretcher bearers and first aid men. That's a universal practice and Dunque performed extraordinarily well that day, tending the wounded after the napalm bombing. So much, in spite of being injured and wounded himself and he was awarded the Military Medal

11:30 for his actions that day. Still a friend of mine, good friend. Living in South Australia these days. Yeah Ronald Dunque.

Did you know anyone personally who was hit by the napalm?

Yes. In fact Harold Giddens was a Victorian and we used to drink with him after the war, you know after we came back. He was released from hospital and his face was terribly scared and his fingers were burnt off to the first joint

12:00 and I never saw them but I believe his toes were as well. But he had a bright outlook on life and was surviving quite well and I heard, I've never been able to confirm it, but I heard later he won 10,000 pounds in Tats and I sincerely hope that it's right. But it was well known amongst the boys that that's what happened. He's dead now but he was one of the survivors,

12:30 there were others who were, I think he might have been the worts of the burns. Dunque tells a story in the Kapyong video, he's got an interview like I have in the video made by the Duntroon college and he tells a story where he was sitting on the edge of a trench feeling very sorry for himself and nursing his own wounds when a

13:00 fellow come along and he said he looked an apparition, he seemed as though the flesh was dripping from his hands, and he said this person said to me, "Christ Nugget you've had a rough day." Whether that

13:30 was Harold or not I'm not certain but it was a burn victim who was coming to Duntroon to get some treatment you know. But Nugget felt it was a story well worth repeating you know. His first comment, "What a rough day you've had mate."

The Aussie sense of humour dies hard.

Yes. Oh they were great guys. You've got no idea of the… how a group of people like that ever got together

14:00 like that you know. They were a mixed bag you know, the old diggers from the occupation and the new kids from Australia and then the recruited ex-servicemen, just formed up into a bunch and yet they formed a very cohesive group and were so closely bound to each other you know and so protective of each other you know and they remained friends for life. I'm still in contact with a hundred of them you know.

14:30 And yeah, so it was an experience that lasted a lifetime. My own experience, I'm back in Japan, I'm in the hospital and I've only been there for about 24 hours and a very important looking doctor escorted by a bevy of other important looking people plus the head nurse you know, the nursing sister in charge, come around and stop at the end of my bed and said, "Connelly?" and I said, "Yeah. Yeah."

15:00 He said, "Show the doctor your wound?" I'm sort of dressed and I thought, I was pretty naïve in those days you know so I stand up, hop out of bed, stand up beside her and I thought, "I'd better not be foolishly modest," you know so I dropped my pyjamas and lifted my pyjama coat to show him and the reaction was, "Oh! Oh! Oh!" I don't know how they expected me to

15:30 show it because it was right up in my groin. It had come out through the cheek of my ass. How the hell it missed my hip and bones I'm buggered if I know. It must have, because it came from one of the guys

in the trenches and he was only ten foot away from me max. Went straight through, made a little hole where it went in and a big hole where it came out. My mate Eck come across to see how I was getting on, he was in 6 platoon, I was in 5, and he came across, “How you going Con?” I said

16:00 “Oh I’m all right Eck,” and he said, “Bastard.” You asked me before were we crook on the enemy and generally we weren’t but Eck was crook on the enemy because they’d shot his mates you see and he walked around the back of me. You know I’m saying you know I’ve got this little hole here but it blew all the seat of my pants out and the flesh was bulging out because in the exit wound but it goes back in easy later you know, it

16:30 heals up, only leaves a tiny little hole but he was bloody furious. Bloody furious. And there were dead Chinese right along both sides of this gully, they’d died in the action during the night you know and he was a very volatile fellow Eck, wonderful character but a very volatile character and he came on and he gave a couple of them a bit of a kick and he said, “You bastards!” You know, just letting the anger out of himself and one of them jumped up.

17:00 He was lying dog-o. And Eck shot him dead. Eck carried a little Owen gun and as soon as this fellow jumped up – bumf! You know, gave him a blast. Owen gun fire is very fast, a little sub-machine gun you know but he didn’t get any sympathy off any of us of course and eventually Eck

17:30 and a couple of boys that came over with him, did what they could for us you know and helped us get on the tanks and that and then they had to scoot off and rejoin the battalion. Yeah, he was very angry. Very angry indeed and I was saying, “Oh it’s all right mate.” “Bastards!” he’s saying. Yeah. So I get out of hospital after a few days, and they

18:00 sent me across to, for a bit of recuperation on a little island called Miyajima which was a sort of little holy island that the Japs had in the middle of the Inland sea. Beautiful little place. Whenever you see Japan you see this great big thing and they call it ‘Tori’ which is two big posts with a sort of a curved, looks like a big gateway. It’s some sort of a sacred thing I think. And there were the main one of those was on this island of Miyajima.

18:30 So I spent a fortnight there resting and recuperating. Spending my thousand dollars which had a very warm feel in my pocket once I knew that I was on my way out and although I was unconscious for a few days, nobody stole it from me which was kid of good. Not that my own people would have but I was in the hands of the Indian field ambulance and then the evacuation

19:00 people and so on. Could have lost it but I got back with all the money and had a lot of enjoyment out of it which I didn’t expect. I expected to just carry it around for a while and probably lose it somewhere.

What did you spend it on?

Wine, women and song. I shared it with quite a few mates you know. There were a few of the other boys there. We should press on, I’ve got more to tell u. Lets see,

19:30 yeah I had a fortnight at Miyajima and then went back to the reinforcement barracks where, I was going back to Korea you see, and you had to wait until there was transportation to get you across and I’d been there for 3 or 4 days and I came down with a dreadful attack of pneumonia. God I was out of my mind, I felt bloody terrible. Went out to take a leak and then I vomited and a great big

20:00 bloop of black stuff fell in the urinal and I thought, “Shit. That don’t look too good.” So I went back to bed and some official come around and said, “Get up you lazy bastard!” and I said, “I’m crook,” and he said, “Get up!” Eventually I convinced him and finished up back in the Kure hospital again and was treated there for pneumonia. I think I was unconscious for two or three days,

20:30 perhaps they did it on purpose I don’t know but when I woke up that’s when I was telling you the Canadian was in the bed next to me and he’d been drinking grog made out of the methylated spirits that we used to… What was called canned heat. I chatted to him later and he said, “Yeah we made a big batch of this grog and quite a few of us got stuck in,” and he said four or five of them died.

21:00 He was telling me his story you see and he said, “Another dozen of us were evacuated sick,” you know, it corroded all their insides But he said that the officer commanding the battalion laid out the five or six bodies on the side of the parade ground, formed the battalion up and marched them past and made them look at the dead bodies and said, “That’s what happens if you drink canned heat.”

21:30 And one supposes they took it as a reasonable warning. This poor bugger, he was, all this black stuff coming out of his stomach you know. I think it, the tube went under the blankets, I think it was connected to his stomach, I’m not too sure. Could have been his bowel or something or his bladder even. Anyhow, I get out of the hospital and back to the reinforcing depot and I’m ready to go back to Korea.

22:00 And one day they said, “Right, grab your gear,” about 20 of us, they shipped us down. Took us by bus down to the docks, there was a ship in harbour and I should go back a little pace and tell you there was a good deal of animosity between the Canadians and the Australians, mostly it was just high spirits but it used to get a bit rugged at times and there’d be a few brawls and occasionally a gun would be produced. This is in and around the city of Kure.

22:30 And when our 20 or so Australians arrive at the docks to get on the ship to go back to Korea there's about 500 Canadians on it. And they were already onboard and when we go onboard there's a bit of niggling and a bit of nudging and a bit of argy bargy so the Australians declare the Canadians on… "Any of you guys want to fight from a ring and we'll have you."

23:00 And we had one really tough guy, Charlie Donovan and he stripped down, he was covered in black hair all down his back and thick set, rugged and a really tough guy and so here we are 20 Australians and I don't know how many Canadians, I said 500, there might have been 200 or 300 but there was a very large number of them. Charlie and the best of the Canadians in the middle of the ring

23:30 and punched the hell out of each other and we put another guy up and we won both the fights you know, we knocked them out of the ring. And they started to get a bit angry about it and we started to get a bit offensive to them and a bit of a general brawl was developing you know. In fact, it did get pretty hectic. Pretty hectic. So, an announcement comes over the ship's loud speaker system, "All Australians pack up

24:00 your gear and off the ship. Captain's orders. Now." I suppose it's better to put 20 Australians off than 300 or 400 Canadians. The captain said his state of mind was that he wasn't going to go across the China Sea with a boat load of brawlers and so what happened? A bus pulls up and the Australians get loaded up in the bus with all our gear again, we were off the ship, and all the Canadians

24:30 are on the rail giving us yahoo and spontaneously the Australians burst into their battalion theme song that I told you about earlier, 'We're a pack of bastards." At the top of their voices you know. Funny day. But.

25:00 **Where did you go to then?**

Well we were whisked off. Look I can't quite remember whether we went to the holding barracks or whether we went straight down to the airport but I know that within 24 hours we'd beat the Canadians back to Korea, we went by air. I think the powers that be must have said, "Don't muck about. Get them off the boat, get them on a plane or something." We went by plane and I rejoined the unit, it was summertime

25:30 and quite different you know, I'd only experienced the autumn and the winter and perhaps the very early spring but it was full summer, about June or early July when I got back. And by then we were in defensive positions and that's the way the war went from then on. There was very little movement up or down the country, the defensive positions were established at or near the 38th Parallel and in fact we had

26:00 half of ours over it and half under it and they had the same you know so as to not concede any ground either way. We were to hold a bargaining position I gather, I can imagine but, and so many of the guys had gone. I didn't know many of the fellows that were left in the company. We'd had a lot of losses in personnel. In fact I did a little

26:30 sum yesterday in preparation for this, by the time we get to Kapyong, out of about six or seven hundred fighting men we'd had 94 killed in action and 265 wounded, a total of 360 and that's one in two. Sure reinforcements were coming through all the time but most of those would have been out of the original battalion and that's in about six or seven months. So

27:00 they're pretty high casualties. If it happened today there'd be a public outcry but in those days it was just the accepted thing. You're in a war, you lose a few. We lost a lot more in the Second World War and we didn't think it was outrageous either but on reflection it's clear that it was… Anyhow when I get back to the battalion I don't know anybody, I don't know anybody well and none of my best mates are still there. So I transferred to a driving position.

27:30 I got a job driving a jeep just shifting supplies around and stuff like that, which suited me and it seemed no time then before the battle at Mary… I had to make up the time that I spent back in Japan, it wasn't taken in as part of my twelve months service even though it was wounded time, I had to make it up. So when we landed on the 26th of September and the twelve months would have been up on the anniversary of that date I was still in Korea in October.

28:00 And I was still there when the battle of Maryang San took place. Fortunately for me because I knew I only had two weeks to go I wasn't in the front line. I was behind the lines ferrying supplies and so on. Taking up ammunition and food and so forth and that battle went on for four or five days. And I've got some figures on that too I think. Without making this into a statistical exercise but the battalion

28:30 lost 20 killed and 89 wounded in the battle at Maryang San trying to take some high ground which they were successful in doing. And that brought the total killed and wounded up to at that time 468. She was a fairly hectic and active sort of a campaign. About a fortnight after the battle of Maryang San my time was up and I packed up and

29:00 moved back to Japan. Spent two or three weeks there waiting for transport home and came home in a very luxurious super-Constellation, big four engine, pistol engine plane, propeller driven but much more luxurious than the old Lincoln Bomber that we'd, or Lancaster Bomber that we went up in. Still owned by Qantas and before we knew it we were backing Sydney. Our big adventure was all over.

29:30 **What was it like coming back to Australia?**

When I got back to Japan I knew my departure back to Australia was imminent and I sort of formed a thought that I didn't really want to go. I think perhaps I wasn't ready you know and I tried to delay it. You can usually manipulate things a bit you know, change schedules and that if you

30:00 push things. If you push for it you can change it so I was there for four or five weeks and when I knew I had to go I went out and got terrible pissed as a last gesture and in that state I saw some provos in the street and deliberately gave them a mouthful of cheek. Not something I'd pre-planned but I finished up spending the night in jail and I thought, "Now this will be all right. I'll get

30:30 charged. I won't go tomorrow, I'll be able to stay for another six or eight weeks even if I get a weeks confined to barracks or something." But in fact the next morning they said, "Right. Come on," took me down to the airport and I come home. So I didn't get the extension after all, the final one. The stay of execution as it were.

Why were you so reluctant?

I don't know. I really don't know. I can't rationalise it now

31:00 but I guess I'd just been there so long you know. It'd been about two and a half years by this time and I knew that environment but I didn't know the environment back here. I never learnt to romance girls, I didn't know how to dance, I didn't know what sort of music as being played, I didn't know anything. I felt I'd be out of place back in Australia. I think it's human nature to want to

31:30 stay in the environment you know rather than move to one that you don't know unless you're wanting to do it for the purpose of the experience or adventure. So yeah, there was half formed thought in my mind that I just didn't want to come back. I would have got around it, I just needed a bit more time I think, but when I did come I was fine you know. Came back. There were never any welcome homes or anything in those days because 3 battalion was unique in the fact that

32:00 it went as a unit but it never, ever came back as a unit. It was just constantly reinforced. It had never been done before I read later. Units were kept together, went into action, came out as a unit and came home as a unit but they never did. They were the only battalion there and they were just constantly reinforced and the people were just turning over and being replaced as they were wounded or got sick or their time expired.

32:30 And I've read since that they've said that they would never do that again. It was entirely the wrong thing to do. Yeah so I just drifted back into Melbourne and unheralded and unannounced and went back to the personnel depot. Got some pay and got some clean clothes and wandered out to my family

33:00 home in North Fitzroy and there was nobody home. Empty house. Let myself in, there was just a latch you know on the door, and I can remember my Mum coming in eventually. And the first words she said to me, "Oh, when are you going back?" I don't know where she meant back to, I think she was just taken by surprise and

33:30 blurted out whatever came into her mind. When are you going back? Yeah. The good part was that I caught up with my brother Frank who had already joined the army and had completed his three months training. At that time they were recruiting not ex-World War II troops but men 18 – 19 years old and they were enlisting them for two years service

34:00 specifically for the purpose of doing basic training, going across and doing a twelve month stint in Korea, come back, discharge. Two years, special army. All their numbers started with the digits 4-0-0, they had a six digit number. His was 3/ - that's Victoria – 400441 so he was the 441st K force enlistee in Victoria. So we had a couple

34:30 of weeks together before he went and we didn't talk much about the war, we talked about what had happened to him while I was away and the family and that you know and we met old friends of mine and new friends of his and socialised together and knocked about and then off he went to the war. By that time it was well and truly trench warfare, static war you know one line facing the other. Night patrols

35:00 just feeling out the enemy and so on you know. And not to denigrate it, it was just a different sort of a war altogether, ours was the mobile war, we were forever on the move advancing or retreating one way or the other but the whole thing had become static you know and as you know the peace treaty just… there was a ceasefire but the peace treaty just dragged on and on and in fact I don't think the peace treaty has still been signed between the two halves of Korea.

35:30 So I served out my time in the army. I first went to Puckapunyal and joined 2 Battalion and they sent me to the school of infantry and I got promoted to Corporal and I helped train 2 Battalion because they were going across to Korea as a second battalion to back up 3 and at one stage we actually had 3 battalions in but only for a few days. A third one came in and 3 Battalion came out at that time.

36:00 But 2 Battalion was the second unit to go and I insisted in their training particularly in mortars, which I'd done a course in at the School of Infantry out of Seymour. And then I transferred to the clerical corps, Royal Australia Army Service Corps, all the clerks and bottle washers and people in there and

36:30 I got a job at Royal Park army camp which is as you know just up past Carlton near the University and I was able to go home nights and work 9 to 5 at the personnel depot and I learned a fair bit about clerical work and organisation and so on that I'd never known before. I did a course in typing and correspondence an filing and so on

37:00 that gave me a grounding in administration. So when my six years were up, I elected to get discharged. Mainly because I wanted the money, there was deferred pay amounted to around 300 pounds you know which seemed like a fortune in those days.

37:30 And if I reenlist I don't get the money I'm just in for another six years you know and I didn't think I could face that so I elected to take discharge and join the civil workforce.

When you first came back was there one thing that you were really looking forward to? Your first Aussie beer or something?

No. No.

38:00 No it was all just sort of ordinary. Just ordinary. Nothing sensational or outstanding or extraordinary in my return. It was all very low key.

You weren't looking forward to coming back at all?

Well as I said I was sort of reluctant to leave Japan so I was sort of ambivalent about it you know. Once I knew I was coming, once I knew I had to come I

38:30 had no objection to that and I had no disappointment or anything but I didn't have any particular feeling of joy about it. But as I said to you once I, at that stage when I, you know after the experience at the Slippery slope I just made a conscious decision to not experience any emotion any more. It was the only way I felt I could survive you know. Don't have any, not in literal terms like this but

39:00 the frame of mind I had was don't have any feelings about anything, just keep going and do what you have to do and don't react, don't feel anything you know. And that included happiness as well as, and relationships and things like that you know. And so I was a bit of a loner when I came back. Used to meet the boys

39:30 most days in town you know and have a few beers with them but there was nothing much doing and they weren't very happy days really. I had a hard time settling back down. I just didn't feel as though I fitted in anymore. I'd just been out of the picture for so long and things had changed so much. Wouldn't seem so long now but when you're that age you know, they're pretty vital, formative years and small changes

40:00 can seem big. And there was rapid change in those days you know, attitudes changed and the way things were changed but I settled down. I was all right after a while and I got a job and formed a relationship with a young lady on a casual basis you know and just started to work my way back into the workforce you know. I was a bit erratic. I mean I changed jobs

40:30 in my life time, I drew up a list of all the jobs I had at one stage and the comment was made, "Well Christ you've been terrible erratic and unsettled," and it hadn't occurred to me but I suppose I had you know. I sort of moved on from one job to the other but jobs were plentiful in those days, you could choose what you wanted to do and I was always, I always felt I was moving forward and upwards rather than

41:00 backwards and downwards. And once I did get settled and I met Loretta and we married and in the period before our marriage I knuckled down to a regular job and got a couple of advancements in it and learned a few things that I didn't know before. I worked for the Dunlop rubber company, one of their subsidiaries, because I'd had experience in tyre manufacturing before the war

41:30 I went into a retreading firm. They used to do a lot of that in those days you know, put new treads on old tyres. Trucks, aeroplane tyres, car tyres, the lot. They had a little factory doing that and

Tape 7

00:34 **You began your initial confrontation in Korea in the Pusan Pocket?**

Yes.

That's where you were stationed?

Well we landed in the Pusan Pocket and immediately started to move forward.

Had the Americans moved forward already?

Yes. And they'd made a landing behind the North Korean lines in the area of Seoul and they'd cut the North Koreans off.

01:00 Certainly cut their supply lines and caused them to go into full retreat.

What I meant was, in the actual Pusan Pocket where the troops were when you arrived had the Americans already moved forward from there?

Yes.

They had from there?

Yes. They'd broken out of the Pusan Pocket and they'd landed on the west coast further up and they'd completely broken the enemy

01:30 attack. The enemy was in retreat and we started off immediately chasing after them trying to catch up with the action which we did eventually, once we got north of Seoul. We were in the area where they were still prepared to stand and fight.

What were you expecting to encounter with the North Koreans? What sort of enemy?

You very seldom see the enemy close up. He's usually

02:00 at a distance you know but we were just expecting an enemy you know. I don't think we distinguished them particularly as North Koreans, we just saw them as an enemy army. Their race or their nation would have had no importance and no meaning to us whatsoever. Or to me and as far as I know to my associates.

02:30 We just simply saw it as being a war like situation where there was going to be action against an enemy. And as I mentioned earlier, all the training says, and it seems blunt and it seems brutal but it says the function of the infantry is to kill the enemy.

03:00 And you can't get any blunter than that can you? Not chase him or capture him or anything of that sort but to kill. However you can, wherever you can.

Were you expecting the North Koreans to fight similar to the Japanese from stories you'd heard from World War II vets?

Yeah. I imagine so, yeah.

Did they?

I don't know, I never encountered the Japanese. I'd read about the Second World War…

03:30 **But from say the World War II vets – did they ever make contrasts?**

No. No. I think it was regarded as being entirely normal type of warfare. Except perhaps, the difference perhaps was the mobility of it. The fact that we were able to cover so much territory in such a short time in constant pursuit of the enemy because the North Koreans were almost totally defeated. I mentioned to you

04:00 that we unexpectedly took nearly 2000 prisoners one night. They just pulled up alongside our lines and said, "We surrender." And I know that there was a similar surrender to one of the other units in our brigade, either the Argyles or the Middlesex. They took about 2000 prisoners one night. So in that regard you know they were giving it out fairly easily but at the same time there were

04:30 other elements of their forces that were prepared to attempt to hold the line and defend their positions. And when we struck them, I also said earlier, we simply on orders, attacked them.

Can you describe for me what it's like to be in combat? Your initial encounters and then when you became seasoned?

05:00 What's it's like. Well, there's mixed emotions of fear and excitement. Anybody that says he's not frightened is a bloody liar you know. Everybody has a fear of death. The unknown, the unexpected. But at the same time you've got confidence in your

05:30 fellow soldiers and confidence in your officers to arrange and organise things properly and to give the right orders in the right situation so as to bring about the best possible result. There's a certain fatalism in it which says today could be the day I die but once you've said that to yourself on a dozen occasions it ceases to have much meaning.

06:00 It just becomes fixed in your mind that one day you're going to get one of them, one of these is going to get you. In a strange sort of a way that relieves you of the worry you know and of course when you go into action you don't really know what the actions going to be and when we went up to Kapyong we had no idea that we were going to encounter a major Chinese army attacking us on all fronts. No idea.

06:30 We'd simply come out of rest, and moved up and took positions to block a road. Nobody really told us that there was going to be a major battle. I don't think anybody really knew really. We were told that the South Korean army had broken and were on the run but that had happened many times before. We'd seen the South Korean army drop their weapons and run

07:00 and so it didn't seem to be at that unusual or all the dangerous the situation. We just thought we'd, I just thought and I guess my comrades did, we'd be taking up the usual defensive positions and we'd hold the line at whatever cost. And that's about what we tried to do. You know that the battalion received the American presidential citation for that action?

07:30 **Which was this one? Kapyong?**

Kapyong yeah. And it was the only one, one of the only two that have ever been given to any Australian unit. The other one was given in Vietnam I think for… I'm not familiar with the Vietnam War but there was a engagement there for which they received a presidential citation also. And once that's been rewarded any

08:00 member who was, any member of the battalion who was on strength on that day, they'd get a role for every day of action you know, was entitled to wear his insignia for the rest of his life. Which is rather nice yeah. Yeah.

What was the difference between the North Korean and the Chinese as far as fighting infantry soldiers was concerned?

Well the North Koreans were on the run. They were going north.

08:30 Heading back for home and being driven or chased all the way and when they did stand and fight they never really made much of a fight of it because they were defeated and they knew they were. That doesn't mean that you don't lose lives in engagements with them, you do. And although we tried to minimise those loses they still occurred and you know they were in some cases fairly severe.

09:00 The Chinese on the other hand came into the war fresh and they had the motivation as they saw it that they were defending their homeland and they had the confidence that they were backed up by a very big nation and they had very, very large numbers. Much larger than ours. So all of those things gave them an aggressive edge and gave them, put them in high morale and gave them confidence when they came into engagements. They fought hard.

09:30 But they suffered big loses. For every one we lost and every one the Americans lost they'd lose fifty. Because they were underarmed and because they just didn't have the resources that we had, the weapons, the artillery, the air cover that could just come in and bombard them, beat them before they even got anywhere near the point

10:00 of engagement. And they had to suffer very large casualties in order to make any progress at all. And that must have been demoralising for them I can imagine. But never the less they were brave soldiers, they wouldn't quit just because they lost the first wave or the second wave, there'd be another wave coming behind them and if necessary they'd climb over their own dead to maintain the attack and you can't ask more than that from any soldier in the world, in any country

10:30 can you?

Have you ever done an attack where you'd have to walk over your own soldier's bodies?

Yes. Yes. And on one particular occasion very early on in the war I actually stepped over the body of a very good friend of mine. Very early on.

11:00 His name was Ron Saul, and he was an old soldier and when I first arrived in Japan I was allocated the bunk next to his in the barrack room and we became pretty good friends. He was something of a mentor to me and I have a great deal of admiration for him. He was a quiet little fellow but very determined and

11:30 always trying to do his best and we went on an attack this day and as I stepped over this body knowing it was one of our men I looked down and it was my old mate Ron Saul and I felt pretty bad about it. Pretty bad. And it was early on too. But yes, on other occasions, in other situations where we've put in major attacks, yes, I've stepped over the bodies of our own people. I've seen them fall

12:00 alongside me. You think, "Well, why the hell is it him and not me?" That thought goes through your mind. But you don't dwell, I don't dwell on those things. It's a matter of accepting the situation as it is and doing what you have to do and always maintaining hope perhaps that you'll come through it.

But when you say you don't dwell

12:30 **even though I completely accept and agree with what you're saying, your subconscious still absorbs and it's like taking a photo of something. The eyes and you look at something and you take that image, you never forget that image, even though you can physically put it out of your mind it can come back in your dreams…**

Oh there's no doubt about that. My wife, I still to this day and many, many times over our forty plus years of marriage

13:00 have in the middle of the night violently lashed out, kicked or swinging arms and punching and perhaps shouting very loudly and she'd say, "You'll bloody hit me one day," but I said, "No, no I'll never do that," and I can't account for what's happening in these dreams. I'm just in some situation that I must get out of and I act violently to get out of it. Then I awaken

13:30 thinking, “What was that?” and I don’t really know but I guess it’s something that’s deep down inside and it’ll be there always yeah. Of course.

Can you remember these dreams?

I can’t remember what happens in the dream but as I wake up I realise you know that I’ve shouted, just on the verge of waking you see, and I’ll just lash out with feet or with arms or elbows and she’s sort of learnt to duck pretty

14:00 quickly. She says that she can feel me being restless before it might happen but it’s happened many times.

How many times?

In the 40 years, 40, 50 times I suppose. I don’t know, I don’t count but you know you asked the question, I’ll give you an estimate.

You're saying that this happens about once a year?

Something like that, yeah. Like nothings ever a clear line. It happens in waves you know,

14:30 like a period where it happens and a period when it doesn’t happen. As recently as a fortnight ago I kicked the end of the bed out and swung my arms and shouted out very loudly. And woke my wife up and startled her and I can’t remember when it happened before that but I know that it’s happened many times. I can’t explain it, it’s just there. It just happens.

15:00 **Would you say that you were a sensitive person before the war? Emotionally sensitive. It can vary, doesn't mean you burst into tears all the time.**

I’ve never been like that. That’s a sort of sentimental… No, I’ve never been that. I’ve always been, I hope I’ve always been rational and cool and reasonably calculating but what I was

15:30 saying earlier in the interview was that at one stage I clamped down on all my emotions because I couldn’t allow them to take control of me. And having done that, it’s then hard to unclamp if you like, to come back to a normal emotional state. And it took a while for that to happen with me and I don’t know that it’s happened 100% even today. But I can’t judge it of course, I wouldn’t

16:00 know what a normal emotional state is perhaps anymore than you would.

Did you seek any psychiatric assistance during or after the war?

Many years ago my wife and I both went to see a psychiatrist, we were having, our relationship was in bad order. Probably due to my emotional state you know, and we made

16:30 half a dozen joint visits to him and well, any treatment of any situation tends to calm it down doesn’t it and I suppose we’d reached a peak of an emotional disturbance state and the visits to the psychiatrist probably calmed it down and got us back to a more normal state which we were both very happy about because we didn’t want anything to

17:00 happen to our marriage you know. We’ve always been very close and we’ve got a wonderful family and we wouldn’t want anything to ever interfere with that but sometimes you can’t control what happens to you, particularly if you’ve had experiences of the sort we’ve been talking about today. I made a claim for disability pension when I retired from the workforce.

17:30 I had to retire early, I wasn’t coping very well. In fact, I was easily angered and irritated and difficult to get on with and I suppose that was some sort of an emotional state and the psychiatrist told me that I’d had a very erratic lifestyle since the war and I’d been unsettled and so on and that I was probably reacting to

18:00 war like experiences. And he was kind enough to recommend me for some sort of disability pension, which I still receive.

I’d like to go back to the Korean conflict again, your first experience in combat, I’m going to be direct to you and ask this; when you killed the first person did you know you killed him?

18:30 I know what you’re asking – did you shoot somebody and see them die?

Yes. So many soldiers don't.

I know. It’s hard to tell and I read recently that many soldiers, it’s been proven that many soldiers deliberately fire over the head of people. But yeah in the battle that we mentioned which was when Colonel Greene got killed

19:00 and I think I mentioned earlier where that was, I’ve forgotten now. When I arrived at the top of the ridge the enemy was still there and I fired on them with my Bren gun and I saw two of them fall and that was an early experience for me. Had no emotional effect on me whatsoever. Just took it as a day at the office you know. I didn’t sort of think, “That’s the first time I’ve killed somebody,” or, “What a terrible thing it is.”

19:30 It was there, they had the chance to kill us, we took the situation and we had to kill some of them. A lot of North Koreans died that day, they were lined up. I told you when I went around with Tully when he was wanting, he asked me to go and have a look around and it turned out he wanted to go souvenir hunting or looking for pistols and there were rows of dead you know and I suspect that

20:00 many of them were not dead at all but they were waiting for the sun to go down so they could get up and run away. But many of them were dead yeah and I suppose the fellow that blew his own head off with his own grenade was probably already severely wounded and had little to hope for. Last desperate act perhaps. I don't know.

20:30 **You said you behaved professional as far as killing is concerned, which is understandable, soldiers do that, but at the same token, did you ever get sick of it? You said that the North Koreans and the Chinese were dying in very large numbers, does that have an effect?**

No.

21:00 **The reason why I ask that is Australian soldiers, I mean Gallipoli, they were very keen to go and fight and they went to Gallipoli they experienced many attacks and one of the soldiers said it got to a point when he just wanted it to stop because they were just killing them like turkeys. That's understandable I suppose because it's sort of like contrary to the way they viewed war. What about yourself in that regard?**

Hard to analyse but if

21:30 we were being attacked then you'd shoot without compunction because they're going to kill you if they get the opportunity and your job is to kill them. That's clear interesting he instructions. Kill the enemy. Kill the enemy. That's what you're there for. That's if they're attacking us, if we're attacking them then they're going to kill us if they can you know and we've got to kill them to save ourselves and to do the job in hand.

22:00 If the enemy turns and runs I wouldn't, I never have and I never would, shoot them in the back as they ran away.

Why's that?

Well it's a different situation isn't it? If they're running away and your only option is to shoot them in the back I haven't done that and I wouldn't do that. I don't know, I never rationalised it, I never thought

22:30 it through but it's something I didn't do and I wouldn't do.

Thinking back now why do you think you didn't do that?

It seemed to me to be not fair. Not fair play. Sport plays a big part in army training you know and playing the game and doing the right thing is emphasised and even though

23:00 they say, "Kill the enemy," you're sure you're killing if he's attacking you or if you must attack him but if he's leaving, if he's going away then there's no compelling reason to shoot him. It has been done, I've seen it done and I know sometimes some of the old diggers will say they enjoyed a turkey shoot or some such thing but I think that's just bombast. Hyperbole.

23:30 I don't think it happened very often and certainly I didn't personally experience it or do it.

If you did see it did you react negatively to it?

No. No. It's done, done you know. It's all part of the… I mean men go mad in war. You've got to understand that too. They become brutalised and well,

24:00 beyond unfeeling, they become savage. No question about that but then that's the sort of situation you're in you know. It's a savage world that you're living in and I've seen enemy prisoners shot dead, particularly if we're advancing and there's no chance or no opportunity to take the prisoner forward or release him I've seen them shot dead.

24:30 **How often did that happen?**

Not very often in my personal experience but if I've seen it happen two or three times you can say it's happened 100 times. But you know we don't want to dwell on that. The force of circumstances and I'm sure that happens in all wars. Quick merciful execution. Bang.

What about after a battle -

25:00 **you've got dead bodies everywhere, in front of your trench, obviously you'd be doing clearing patrols. If you encounter injured people what happens to them? You or any other soldiers for that matter.**

Yeah. Yeah. I can't remember actually ever having done that. Gone forward over the attackers and because we were only in defensive on that one occasion at Kapyong and we didn't go forward, we went

back.

25:30 On all other occasions when we met the enemy we were on the attack. And somebody else cleans up the mess, the front line soldiers go through. There's others who follow up behind and take care of the dead and the wounded and clean up the battlefields and that. I don't know who they are or where they come from but they're there, there are street cleaners and garbage collectors in society.

26:00 **How about you do an attack on an enemy position, you overrun their position, dead bodies lying everywhere but you hold that position – what happens to the wounded? You can't treat them and they're a danger. What would honestly happen in those situations?**

Well I told you earlier that when I fell in front of the trench of the Chinese that I was fearful that their next action would certainly be

26:30 to shoot me through the head. And I know that's been done many times on both sides. I expected it to happen to me because that's probably what I would have felt constrained to do if I was in those circumstances. I'm happy to say that I was never in the situation and I never had to do it. Never. But it's been done and I was very much aware of that when I'm thinking to myself, "I'd better get myself out of here'

27:00 because certainly they're in a perilous situation and no further attacks are coming, they don't know how badly wounded these wounded people are, they might jump up any minute and start throwing grenades into their trench so finish them off. It's brutal and it's savage but it's not brutal and savage every minute of the war. There were peaks and those peaks might be a fairly long way apart but at the peak brutality and savagery reigns.

27:30 **What about the cultural encounter? There's something about close combat, it becomes extremely personal. Within five or ten metres in front of you – what's that like?**

It didn't happen in our war, well not in my experience,

28:00 did I mention also, the war can be happening here and it can be happening there and you can be there and not taking part in it. You're holding your position you know so it may have happened to many others but it never happened to me personally and the theory behind the bayonet charge is not that you will in fact jump in the trench and bayonet the enemy, it's that he'll get such a hell of a fright when he sees you coming at him with a bayonet to knock him off he'll turn and run.

28:30 It's a fear thing. And even in bayonet training you're taught to be extremely aggressive and very loud and vocal. Yelling and rushing in with, in a threatening way. I'd never bayoneted anyone, the weapon I carried had no bayonet on it. I mentioned to you that I always carried the Bren gun,

29:00 the light machine gun for the section. My job in an attack was to protect the guys with the rifles and bayonets by giving them covering fire across the whole front of the section. And a Bren gun is too big, too heavy, too cumbersome to walk with to attach a bayonet in any other way so I never really had the pleasure of, the opportunity of it to

29:30 threaten anybody with a bayonet. I never carried a rifle, I always carried the Bren gun.

Have you seen it with other people?

No. I've never seen it get to the point of that close contact. At Kapyong when I was wounded and my section was wiped out, I told a story that 4 platoon of my same company went in

30:00 and wiped out the enemy. I understand that they jumped into the trenches and there was hand to hand combat then. And I mentioned that there were about 80 plus Chinese in the trenches and our section was thirty men. So look they would be able to tell stories of hand to hand combat, in the enemy's trench. That's about as close as you can

30:30 ever get but no, I personally haven't ever been confronted with that situation. Most of the war I've been engaged in has been attacks and confrontation and well, up till Kapyong we always won. We never lost a battle up til then. And we didn't lose at Kapyong, we held the line overnight, held it as long as we was

31:00 absolutely essential to get reorganised in the rear echelons. What else have you got there?

Tell us what a human wave assault was like?

Human wave.

Now you said the Australian way of mass attack was 6 feet by the sides and twelve feet behind - what was the Chinese version of that?

They tend to come in mobs. Much more disorganised than

31:30 we would be. We're not ever disorganised but they, what appeared to be disorganised groups. They would form a large group of say 100 men and try and all charge at the one, the weakest spot they can detect in the defences. And that's a recipe for most of them to get mowed down you know because the defenders can throw grenades down the hill at them, they can bring in covering

32:00 fire from the meteor machine guns on both sides and the defenders in the line itself can get a good shot at them from cover so it's a very difficult way to fight a war but as they had nothing else but numbers, that was the way they wanted to do it. And they would just form up into more or less a group you know and just make their charge at one point.

32:30 And they'd just get knocked over like nine pins.

I heard the Chinese are very chivalrous, that is, they believed in some from of rules to engagement?

As did we do yeah.

I suppose towards the enemy.

Yes.

Tell us about that.

I haven't had any personal experience of it.

33:00 As a generality I think that the Chinese are relatively chivalrous if you like group of people. They're not given to great savagery, deliberate murder or anything of that sort or not in my experience or any stories I've ever heard but neither are our people. When I've said that

33:30 savage acts had been committed, they'd been committed in the most extreme circumstances and I suppose ultimately they can be justified by people saying, "Well this is for the greater good. If we don't do this the consequences will be greater on us than they are on the people who lose their life." But in the heat of the battle itself nobody's going to be forgiving on anybody

34:00 else. You're not going to be saying, "Well, we'll try and not hurt these guys, we'll try and just catch them in the neck," or something. It doesn't work like that.

So what would happen in a situation where your unit has inflicted heavy losses…

Suffered heavy losses?

Inflicted but get s encircled and the situation becomes hopeless – what's the

34:30 **likely reaction of an enemy once they've lost heavily and they capture you?**

You mean would they be vengeful. Look, we'd have to generalise about it. I'm sure that can happen and I'm sure it did happen. I don't think have any personal experience of it. There was the case of, there was a Turkish brigade in Korea and a brigade is about 3000 men and one night amidst all sorts of confusion

35:00 very early on in the war that brigade was attacked by the North Koreans who were still defending at that stage and suffered very, very heavy casualties indeed when they got ran over and we went to try and help them the next day but by then the North Koreans had withdrawn after having inflicted all the damage and I'm sure that many of those wounded people were wounded after the battle was lost but that's only an observation on my part you know.

35:30 They suffered very, very casualties. At least 10% of them killed and many, many more wounded. Almost wiped them out. Certainly put them out of action but even that wouldn't be vengeful you know, they would overrun them and they would do what they felt they had to do. I don't think there's any animosity in war. I've read a story about the First World War where the two sides declared a bit of a truce between them and played cricket on Christmas Day or some such thing

36:00 and then went back in the trenches and got on with the war the next day. I mean the soldiers themselves had no animosity to each other and yet when they were ordered into action they would do everything they could to preserve their own life and to overcome the enemy but those are observations, not personal experiences.

How long did you serve in Korea for?

36:30 The commitment was to serve for a period of twelve months, I went across with the battalion on the original landing on the 28th of October 1950 and I came back to Japan about mid-November 1951 and the extra time that I served there was for the time that I had spent back in Japan. Not the time I was I hospital – that was counted – but the time that I spent in

37:00 the reinforcement depot waiting to get back was counted as time not served. Now you didn't have to go up and tell somebody your time was up or anything, they kept a record and they'd come to you one day and say, "Pack your gear, you're out." You'd say, "Oh gee, thanks mate. That'll be nice."

If only you could tell them when you want to leave.

Look I'll be resigning tomorrow.

You were involved in the retreat from the Yalu River -

37:30 **were you actually stationed right next to the river?**

I believe so. As an ordinary soldier it was pretty hard to tell where you were you know but I believe that we were overlooking the Yalu River and looking across to Manchuria. General MacArthur got permission from the president of the United States, no he wanted permission to bomb China and to invade China and

38:00 the Chinese became very nervous about that. He never, ever got that permission but he was such a headstrong bugger that he might have gone ahead and did it anyway. He wanted to wipe out the problem, as he saw it, the problem of China for all time and stop them from being communists and turn them into good democrats or something. But of course that would have started World War III and Russia would have become involved and so on and President Truman wisely sacked MacArthur and wouldn't let him go ahead with it.

38:30 But it was too late, the Chinese had already become highly alarmed and in any case North Korea was their neighbour and their ally and when the war got so close to their borders they came in, in great numbers and of course by that time our lines of supply and communication, I mean we'd gone up there so fast that the rear people hadn't kept up with us you know and you couldn't get any sort of decent supplies

39:00 or equipment or any of that sort of… But when the withdrawal started and you've prompted my memory of an event that occurred there, we withdrew a mile or two and were then told to close the road and hold it and we found a spot where there were hills on both sides of the road, you look for a spot where the road narrows right down and there are steep hills either side so you can control that road with your troops on the hills.

39:30 We had such a position and the big withdrawal was on and Americans and mostly Americans were surging through, hour after hour after hour trucks and tanks and personnel carriers and all manner of things all retreating because they were overstretched and undersupplied and outnumbered by the Chinese. Had to get back where they could form a new defensive line.

40:00 So through they went and here we are, we're holding the road.

Tape 8

00:35 So the big withdrawals on. We had to hold the road open and let the whole of the withdrawing army go through and then make sure the road says open for laggers. Two days; trucks personnel carriers, tanks, all sorts of people and equipment thundered down the road. And we

01:00 just sat in our defensive positions on either side and then suddenly it came to the end and then and a great quietness fell over the whole scene and we thought, I thought, my friends thought, "This is it, we'll pack and we'll go because those Chinese are coming out." But we didn't. We sat and we sat and we waited and we waited and nothing more came down the road. Everything was quiet and there was no sign of the Chinese.

01:30 We sat there, I have to go by recollection, but after the last of the withdrawal force went through we were there for between 24 and 36 hours more just waiting. Waiting. And hoping and eventually the word came, "Pack up your gear, we're off," and we joined the retreat but those 24 hours after the last of the retreaters went through were a time of

02:00 apprehension and just a little concern.

That's a bit strange the Americans weren't pursued by the Chinese immediately.

The Chinese were slow moving. They had no vehicles, they were on foot. The Americans were on mobiles you know, they had plenty of trucks and personnel carriers and all sorts of transport and equipment. The Chinese had jumped into the war very quickly and got their people our side of the Yalu River as I understand

02:30 it, reading the history on it but they weren't ready immediately to make a great advance you know and the United Nations army was pulling out because they knew that when the advance did come they had no chance of holding it. When the Chinese did move they didn't use the roads as it turned out, they couldn't because the Americans had absolutely dominance of the air and if they tried to use the roads then the attack aircraft would come in and just blow them away.

03:00 So they travelled over the mountain ridges. Koreans had little tracks along all the mountain ridges, worn probably over hundreds of years. And that's the way the Chinese advanced so their advance was slow and torturous but unstoppable. And we retreated, the whole army retreated south of the South Korean capital, they conceded Seoul to the

03:30 Chinese army and formed a new battle line south of Seoul.

Did you have any other engagements with the Chinese after that withdrawal phase?

Well that was when the Chinese first came into the war.

But in the actual phase of withdrawal before.

That was about February I reckon of 1951. Yeah we had all future engagements

04:00 so as far as we were aware were with the Chinese but we went into a defensive position on the Yalu River for a couple of months waiting for them to come. We were holding the south bank, we were on ready alert waiting for the attack to come and it never did so we had a month or so of defensiveness there before we

04:30 had a couple of minor contacts with them and then went into our rest area prior to Kapyong. So the first time we met the Chinese in any force so far as we were aware of who the enemy was, was at the battle of Kapyong. And at that stage they had broken through the forward defence lines, they'd forced the Korean, the ROK, Republic of Korea army to

05:00 go into full retreat to drop and run you know. And that breakthrough had to be stopped because the UN army wasn't prepared to concede any more land. They in fact were wanting to go forward and that's what they did from that point onwards.

Were you involved in any ambushes?

No. Ambushes were a feature of the

05:30 trench warfare, we gave that a name, the static phase. Where they would send out patrols of a night and try and ambush and take prisoners and get information about the enemy's actions and intentions. I was never involved in that and when I came back from being wounded in Japan, which would have been in June or July of 1951 and that sort of activity was going on and I

06:00 stayed in the line for only a short period – six weeks or so – before I managed to get a job with the administration side of things and got to drive a jeep around behind the lines. So the great withdrawal and the aftermath of it sticks in my mind, the days of, the time of waiting when the last

06:30 of the UN army had passed through.

What was the state of the American soldiers when they were withdrawing?

Well we used to bollock them a bit you know, the boys used to tease them with a song they had, they said, "Hear the pitter patter of many feet, it's the old 5th Cavalry full retreat, and they're moving on and they'll soon be gone." And that was the sort of attitude we had to the Americans. We had implicit trust in the

07:00 two British battalions that were with us. We knew if they were defending our flanks we felt secure because they used the same tactics and had the same attitude and things that we had. If the Americans were there well we were always just a little apprehensive that they would bug out. They were very quick on the trigger you know, the slightest thing went

07:30 wrong you'd hear firing and explosions and artillery coming in and everything at the slightest sign of any enemy action. But by the same token they were pretty quick to pack up and move if they felt they were in any dire danger. It's an observation. I guess they were just as brave and just as honourable as everybody else in the war but our attitude towards them

08:00 at that time was that we didn't trust them, they were too quick to back off and perhaps desert their position on the flank which would expose us to danger that we wouldn't otherwise have been exposed to. Yeah we didn't trust the Americans and we felt we had justification for that.

08:30 **How were the US marines seen?**

We didn't see much of the marines. We saw mostly army, what they called their cavalry units. They had tanks and they had artillery and they had aircraft back up but I don't think we had any contact with marines. It's pretty hard to distinguish in the American army who's marines and who's army. Marines are actually an army that defends the

09:00 navy. They evolved from the old war ships when they would, in the middle of the ocean board each other you know and they needed a defending force for that on the ship so they would always have soldiers who because they were always serving on ships were known as marines and the Americans have sort of adopted that term but I find it hard to distinguish in appearance who's a marine

09:30 and who's a army man but my impression is, I formed the opinion that marines in the American armed forces are actually members of the navy. That could be incorrect though. I don't think recollect seeing any marines in Korea. That's not to say they weren't there.

How was the air suppose of the Americans towards the Australian units

10:00 **at the front from your experience?**

Yeah it was good. It was great. If you could get air suppose, particularly if you were about to attack and

enemy hill feature it was very comforting to see the American Air Force come in and bombard the situation before you had to make that attack because it would soften the enemy up quite considerably you know and make it a lot easier to complete the

10:30 attack and achieve the objectives and they were about all the time you know, they had spotter planes, they had massive air superiority. But they would only use it effectively if they could find concentrations of groups and particularly if they could find them in open country so they always needed the spotter planes to find them for them. A pilot flying an attack aircraft,

11:00 he can't distinguish what he's seeing on the ground, he's only seeing blobs and shadows and lumps you know. He needs somebody to say to him, "Drop your bombs there. That position," and that's what the little spotter aircraft would do and he would, as I said before he'd fire in and he'd smoke the bugger. He'd fire this smoke bomb that would leave a great trail of smoke acting as though it was an arrow pointing to a certain spot and when the planes came in they'd be just

11:30 circling around you know, like hawks in the air just waiting for a cal in. If they didn't get a call, they'd go back to base and re-fuel, but they were always in the air, they didn't have to take off and come to that spot, they'd be in the air, in the vicinity ready to be called in on a moments notice and when that smoke marker went down they would just swoop in one after the other and drop absolutely everything, saturate the area all around the smoke bomb with napalm bombs, with

12:00 what's that sort of stuff that burns your… not sulphur… I can't think of the name but that was a very, very aggressive weapon. And then they would strafe with their machine guns; 50mm machine guns. They might have as many as four or six of those mounted in the wings and they would just strafe the area. Now that wouldn't kill everybody on the sight, in fact they might only get ten percent of them because they

12:30 used to dig pretty deep trenches and a lot of the blast would just simply go over their head and when the aircraft had gone they'd pop up again but if the aircraft attack was heavy enough it would heavy demoralise them and leave them very vulnerable to being overwhelmed by the attack. Certainly it was an advantage to have them. I'd hate to have been on the other side

13:00 with that coming our way.

Must have made them into very seasoned troops.

Yes. Well they knew the technique for… as indeed I've read about Vietnam, they had very deep trenches and tunnels and things so that they were impervious to the heavy bombardments and so on that they received.

I want to work back to the battle of the bridge – was it at Pakchon?

13:30 I'd have to look at my little note I've got here. Yeah it was at Pakchon. The broken bridge yeah. It occurred on the 25th of October 1950 at Pakchon.

You had two battle experiences – one at Pakchon and one at the battle of the Apple Orchard?

14:00 Yes but the apple orchard was a very early encounter with the enemy. It was mostly handled by C Company but we were on the flanks. The enemy was hiding in amongst apple trees. There was a large apple orchard and they were taking shelter there and they were firing on our vehicles as we went down the road so C Company went in to attack and clean them out and very effectively

14:30 did that but a lot of them and a few strays and a few odd bods took shelter in a rice paddy that had already been reaped and what they used to do in those days was make stooks of the rice stems so as to form a pyramid and their soldiers, those that were routed out of the apple orchard and some of the other strays

15:00 and odd bods took refuge in the stooks. And our people walked through them with bayonets were prodding at the stooks as they walked through the fields and it's on record that General Cody who was in charge of the whole brigade was watching it from some vantage point and he said it reminded him of a turkey shoot in England which

15:30 seemed to be a rather flippant attitude to a serious activity but that was the comment that he is recorded to have made and it's been quoted many times. But what happened to me during that day was I was on the extreme left hand flank and I didn't have a bayonet and I walked past a stook and I set up a North Korean who we hadn't sighted and he had a bayonet on his rifle and I was carrying my Bren gun

16:00 and he took a poke at me with his bayonet and I deflected his stab at me and just took a minor wound across the top of my right thumb and my offsider, everyone who carries a Bren gun's got an offsider,

What's an offsider sorry?

A helper. He's called the number tow on the Bren gun and if the Bren gunner

16:30 is knocked out it's his responsibility to drop his rifle and pick up the Bren gun and it's his responsibility to assist the Bren gunner in every way he can and it's also his responsibility to carry some spare ammunition for the Bren gunner in addition to his own ammunition because the Bren gunner had

several large magazines fixed to the gun and contain about 30 shots. So, I deflect the bayonet,

17:00 and my little mate Lenny Harris immediately shot the North Korean dead on the spot. Which was his duty anyhow, his obligation to me. But yeah it was a near experience for me but it was very early on and it didn't have any profound effect on me. I didn't sort of reflect on it being a near death episode or anything of that sort because so much else was happening

17:30 and everybody was involved in actions of a similar sort that it was a shared experience you know and that sort of softens the emotional impact of it. But yeah it was a good day. Very early on, it was one of our first contacts. I don't know whether it's been recorded by others but when we first arrived in Korea we noticed immediately that all the American jeeps of which there were many had mounted on their front

18:00 bumper bar a vertical piece of angle steel braced with an angle piece pointing out to the front and we wondered what the hell was going on. We quickly learnt that the North Koreans had evolved a technique where they would stretch a fine wire from a tree on one side of the road to a tree on the other side at just about the height of the neck of the driver and passengers in the jeeps because they used to fold the windscreen down too you see and

18:30 drive around with it as a complete open vehicle and I understand although I never saw it personally I understand that many Americans were injured and some were killed by running into these things of wire across the road. So they devised this technique where the bar at the front would come into first contact with the wire

19:00 and snap it or push it up over the top. I heard stories also from the truck drivers that there was a superstition amongst the Koreans that there was a spirit that was always just behind them wherever they went and they'd had very little experience with road traffic you know – trucks, cars, jeeps and the lot but

19:30 when all this traffic first arrived they thought, "Here's a wonderful opportunity to get rid of this spirit that's always following me," so they would go as close as they possibly could to being struck by the truck but hope to just miss it so that the spirit behind them would be knocked over and apparently a lot of Korean civilians lost their life by misjudging the distance and

20:00 getting actually, coming into collision with the truck. A little aside there. I never actually saw it though, I heard it on several occasions on good authority.

Speaking on superstition – tell us about how soldiers react towards superstition? Are they superstitious? Even rational seasoned soldiers…

Not in my experience no. No.

20:30 Not superstitious. Nor generally speaking are they religious, they were very poor attenders at the church services even in the most extreme circumstances. The odd padre would occasionally catch up and offer to perform a religious service but they would be very poorly attended. In my experience

21:00 the guys that I served with had little faith in the hereafter and were more concerned with today. Getting through today and getting through til tomorrow but no superstitious, you mean about other things? Were you thinking religion or…?

Not really. More sort of like…

Like spilling salt and breaking mirrors and things like that?

Well something to do with their lives as soldiers

21:30 **and related to their battle experiences and the war in general. They might have a lucky charm or something that they'd become extremely accustomed to and they need to have theirs with them whatever they're doing…**

I never saw anything like that no. They were all pretty basic down to earth people the people that I served with. I can't think of anybody that ever had anything of that sort you know. But I'm not saying that it didn't happen or couldn't have happened but never in

22:00 my experience.

You were also involved in the battle of the Broken Bridge – you did explain that a little bit before. Can you give us a bigger insight into your role in that battle?

Yes. I was among the first to cross the bridge, in order to get across we had to climb a couple of very

22:30 rough wooden ladders that were hastily nailed together to get across the broken… The span that had broken had fallen on a very steep angle and we could go out that far, somehow we got to the bottom of it and then had to climb up the broken span of the bridge on trestles or ladders and the enemy was on the other side of the river. They

23:00 conceded the ground fairly easily and backed off from the river side but they persisted to harass us but

as I mentioned they were disorganised and so were we. We didn't really know where they were, they didn't really know where we were and then down came the rain like you've never seen before and most of the people that got killed or injured that night were in isolated encounters.

23:30 They'd just inadvertently run into the enemy and in the exchanges were unfortunate enough to be killed or wounded. There was no front to front battle, there was no particular strategy that we were following, we just, well we just bungled around and hoped for the best you know and eventually late in the night we had took up defensive positions so

24:00 that if we were attacked during the night we'd be in a position to fight back but the rain just poured down and the visibility was absolutely limited and as I mentioned before the next morning a good little mate of mine Snowy Blackett was dead only ten feet or so away from me. I don't know how he died or what happened and another big red-headed fellow whose name I forget was one of the only people in the group that used to wear a steel helmet, got shot through his steel helmet and the bullet apparently went around two or three

24:30 times inside the helmet and gave him some moderately severe head injuries and he went back to Japan but I didn't know how those injuries occurred because of the confusion and the noise of the rain and the very heavy rain that fell. So it wasn't one of those glorious encounters you know, it was, at least not in the section that I was in, there were other sections where

25:00 courageous a group of our people encountered an enemy tank and were able to destroy it and that takes a bit of courage and a lot of enterprise.

What sort of tanks did the North Koreans have?

Very small, very noisy, I couldn't gave them a name but I'm sure they would have been made in China and I'm sure they would have been remnants of World War II. Nowhere near the size or the strength

25:30 or the thickness of armour of the armaments that the American tanks had, they had a heavy cannon mounted on the turret where these tanks only had a couple of machine guns sticking out and they only had plate steel round the turret rather than the very think moulded steel that the American tanks had. So they weren't all that good but any tanks against infantry is a major threat

26:00 and it's essential to knock it out as quickly as possible.

You were also involved in the Chongju battle?

Chongju? Was I? Did I mention that? I can't think of where that was now. There was a battle of Chongju was there?

Close to the border or something like that?

Chongju? I don't know.

26:30 **Were you at Chongju as well?**

Yeah I've got Chongju listed as one of the battles that we encountered. That was on the 28th to the 31st October 1950 and we had … Chongju was in the vicinity of Pakchon you see. We put in that attack at…

27:00 No Chongju was the Broken Bridge. I'm sorry to be so, my memory's fallible. Pakchon was the broken bridge and Chongju was a battle of which I've got very little memory but I've got a note here that says 9 killed in action and 37 wounded. And the note, and then we went straight on to Pakchon 15 days later

27:30 and lost another 16 killed and 32 wounded and that included Larson and 'Lofty' Goebel and Lieutenant Colonel Green. So those things all occurred about the same time but I've just sort of got a mixed memory of the events. That was, I told you we went across the paddy field and 'Lofty' Goebel

28:00 lost his life.

That was… What was that? Chongju – that's where 'Lofty' Goebel died?

Chongju was it?

Yeah the paddy field one.

yes. Well you see we were at Pakchon on the 25th of the 10th, we were at Chongju from the 28th to the 31st of the 10th and we were back at Pakchon on the 15th of the 11th so all during that 20

28:30 day period we were in and around Pakchon, Chongju and again at Pakchon. And the Broken Bridge was at Pakchon on the 25th of the 10th followed by Chongju just a few days later.

That's where 'Lofty' Goebel died?

Yeah I think I've got on the right line. If it wasn't it was more likely Pakchon.

29:00 I've forgotten I'm sorry.

What about your battles of Salm…..?

Salmon and Sardine?

Yes that's right. The slippery slope?

Yes.

Tell us about that.

I told about it before where there was a great ice slide down the side of a very steep

29:30 ridge and at the top the mountain ridge was very narrow with a track was only wide enough for one man to go along at any one time but we're going over the same ground here.

No. What I was wanting to know was – that was a particularly difficult battle for you and your company – you'd lost a few guys in that battle…

No A Company, we're talking about the Slippery

30:00 slope as we called it? A Company led into that battle and they lost their men. We came up as reinforcements and were ordered to stand by to attack over the ridge and try and wipe out a machine gun nest that was blocking the narrow path along the top of the ridge but the order never came and darkness fell and we waited and we actually slept on the, or held on the sides, stayed overnight on

30:30 the very steep side of the ridge with our head below the peak of it and the next morning the machine gun nest was gone so my company didn't lose anybody in that particular battle but it's easy to lose track of which one was which. That's why I made a note about it and the history that's been written of those battles is a good clear accurate record, particularly of… it names every

31:00 man killed and wounded in each and every one of the battles and the like and that's written best of all in a book called The last call of the bugle by a Queensland author whose name alludes me of the moment but he was a participant in all of that action.

Did that battle have an effect on you?

The slippery slope, well I was most effected by these

31:30 friends of mien from A Company who'd been killed at the top of the ridge and whose bodies had catapulted down, cascaded if you like down this great icy slope and had fallen in a heap then at the bottom and they were lying on the ground there with their eyes open staring at the sky you know as we slowly and quietly filed past them on our way up to the top of the ridge. I was deeply effected by that and that was a

32:00 peak if you like in my emotional reaction to the war. The point at which I shut down completely so far as emotion was concerned. My inner most feeling was that either I stop feeling any emotion or else I don't cope with the situation so I shut down. Now I didn't do it consciously, it was a matter of it just eventuating. Just coming into my conscious

32:30 you know that that's what I had done and why I had done it and I became quite fatalistic about it. I conceded that in these circumstances there was no chance that I would survive it unscathed because of the large numbers of a very small group that had suffered death and injuries. And my state of mind was

33:00 that I pretty much just become unemotional and I must just simply bear up and do whatever has to be done and just see it through. And that helped me I think but later it was difficult to undo it. You can't turn it on and turn it off you know and it took a long time to get back to a normal emotional state which I believe I've achieved now. I feel very normal at the moment. Even after today's long chat.

33:30 **Well under those circumstances I suppose you have to make some sort of decision.**

Indeed.

With that battle as well I suppose you got to a stage - were things affecting you seriously mentally, your mental health?

No I was in pretty good mental health. I was feeling fine you know. I mentioned that

34:00 by the time we got into our rest area prior to the Battle of Kapyong that we had a very relaxed week or so in a rest area by a lovely flowing stream with grassy banks and shady trees and we actually put tents up and lived like civilised people and got meals out of the kitchen rather than out of the combat rations that we'd been living on for months prior and life at that stage

34:30 seemed pretty normal and I was feeling pretty good apart from a suppressed emotional state that was there but it wasn't bothering me. And I think an indication of how normal I was feeling was the fact that I played blind poker for two or three days and won a fair bit of money. Which is an outstanding memory for me. The memory of having that roll of money and riding out on the back of

35:00 tank after Kapyong being wounded and knowing that I was sufficiently seriously wounded to get a trip back to Japan but not to be in any mortal danger – that was a pretty good feeling.

Was it Hill 750 that you were involved in?

If that was during the mobile war yes I was involved in all actions that took place during the mobile war.

35:30 **Hill 750…**

Would you like me to look at my note? I'm sure I've got some historical facts there. Hill 750, on the 4th of the fourth 1951. According to my note we lost four wounded that day and I don't remember the circumstances. And then from there we went on, on the 15th, that was the 4th of the fourth and on the 15th of the fourth we attacked

36:00 at Salmon and Sardine and I remember that as being a situation where we had to drive the Chinese off these two hills and capture them and I have the recollection that for the first time we were supported in an action by the Australian Air Force, they had some twin jet aircraft that were very, very noisy. When they flew low over our heads so as to attack the enemy who were on the next ridge across just the noise that they made as they went overhead was enough to

36:30 scare the wits out of you. I can't remember ever hearing a noise like it. On the other hand it was a comforting noise because we knew they were our people and they were attacking not us but the enemy you know and clearing the way for us to capture those hills. But we had nobody killed in action over either Hill 750 or at Salmon and Sardine. That was on the 15th of the fourth and it was then that we went into the rest area.

37:00 Immediately after Salmon and Sardine. And that was the 15th of the fourth so the next day we would have been in a rest area and we stayed there until we got up to Kapyong which was on the night of the 23rd of April so we had a nice eight days of rest and recuperation.

You went to Pyongyang? What was it like when you went there? This is well before Hill 750…?

Oh yes. It was on the way north in 1950.

37:30 Well it felt like a significant achievement but for a capital city of a country like North Korea it was a pretty small place you know. And we weren't first in, we could have been, we were on the outskirts but we weren't allowed to go in and the Americans came through and went in first and then erected a big sign saying 'Welcome to Pyongyang courtesy of the 5th Cav Division' or something you know.

38:00 Just a bit of rivalry there. But I suppose in terms of international politics it was warranted and merited. And look my experience of Pyongyang was that we were in trucks, we drove along the road to Phnom Yang, drove through the middle of the city and out the other side. We didn't stop. I heard later that some Australians blew open a safe in the big bank in the middle

38:30 of… with an anti-tank weapon but that was a rumour. I don't know whether it was true or not. But it was the sort of thing they were likely to do. Not to get the money but for the thrill of the experience. There were some pretty rough characters in this crowd you know. They were a great mix of people.

39:00 **Your overall experience in Korea – how did it shape your life and what did it give you in both negative and positive terms?**

Well it affected me, in negative terms it affected me emotionally you know. I became emotionally inert if you like. I had my emotions so strictly under control that I could neither be

39:30 sad nor happy nor very loving nor could I even, I had no emotion of anger or anything of that sort. I just was, it was negative in an emotional sense and I grew out of that. It took time but I grew out of it. If I had the time over again I'd do it again. For all the bad times

40:00 it was a wonderful experience and something that you could never, ever experience in any other way in any other time and I'm sort of grateful for having had the opportunity to be there and to have that experience. But as with childbirth, they say that a woman only remembers the joy of receiving the child and forgets about the pain you know, and one tends to remember the good times

40:30 and put the bad times so far back in the memory that they're almost completely dulled out. But I was fortunate, I was a nobody, I had no education, I had no future and that experience gave me a life outlook and experience that allowed me later in life to be quite successful in management and

41:00 to work my way up through the corporate network and to do important work in management and to make quite a nice living from it and as you see I've retired in rather comfortable and desirable circumstances and I think it all comes from that part of my life. It started with the experiences in Japan and Korea.

INTERVIEW ENDS